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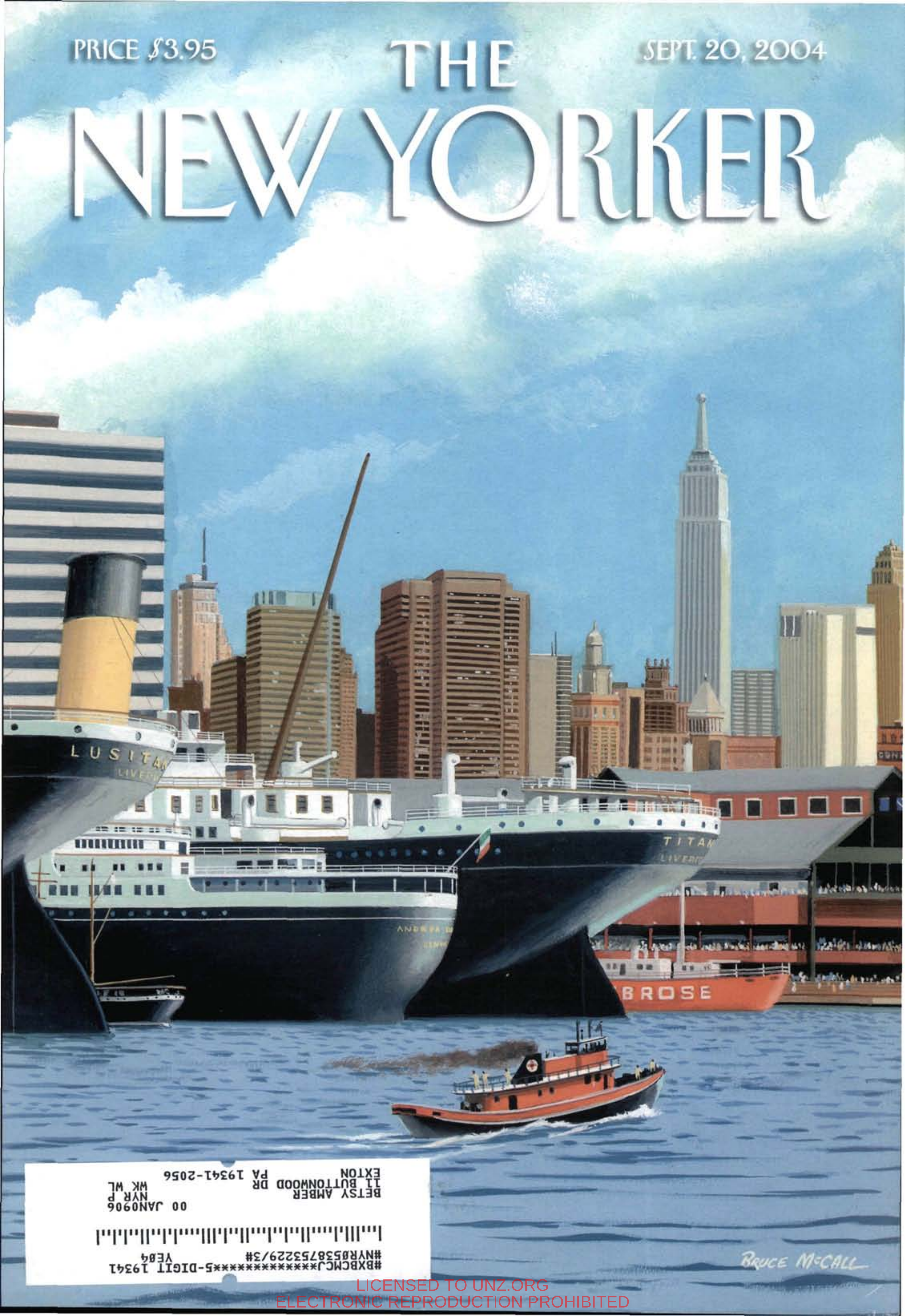
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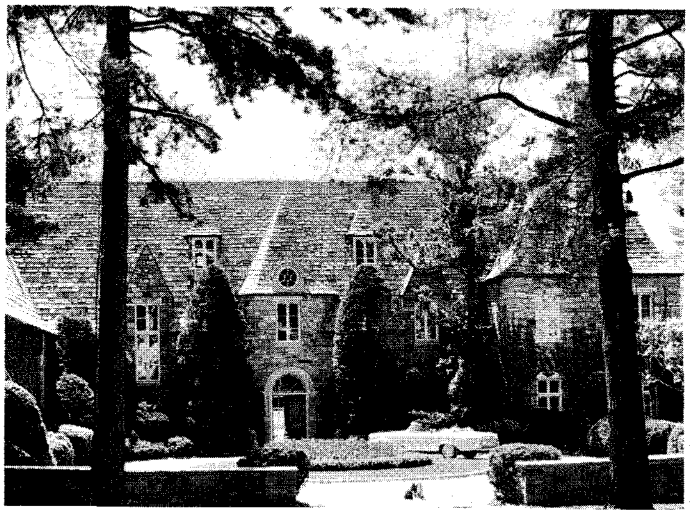

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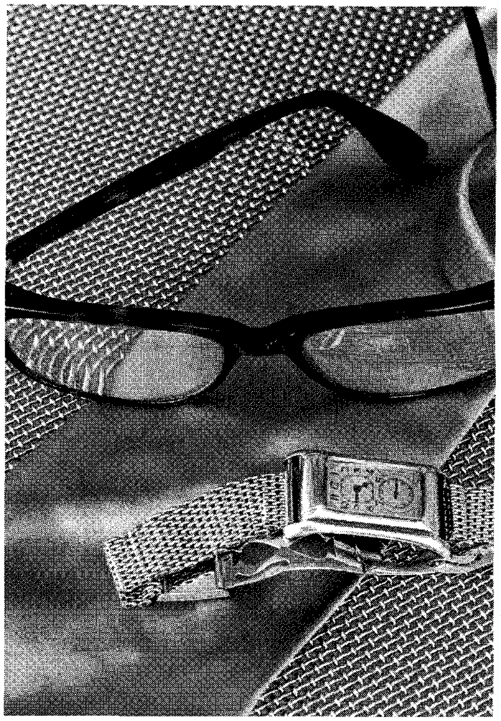

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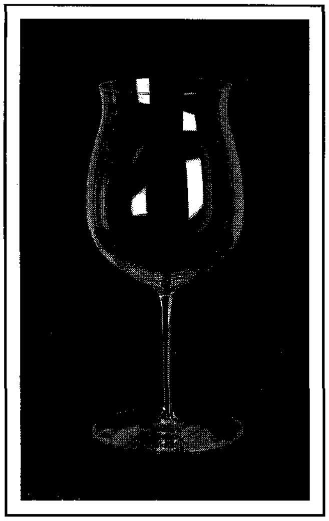

While the debate continues over real or perceived dangers of lead in crystal glassware, some authorities have issued regulations or advisories on the subject.

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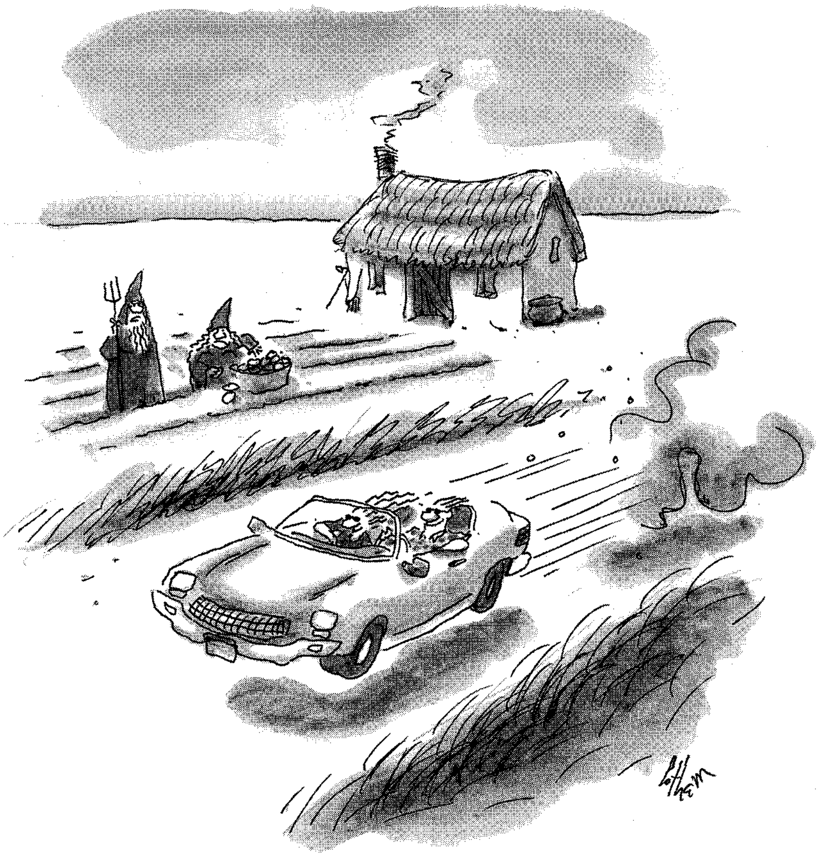
Lee Lorenz (The Back Page, p. 110) is a former art editor of *The New Yorker*. His cartoons have appeared in the magazine since 1958. ◆



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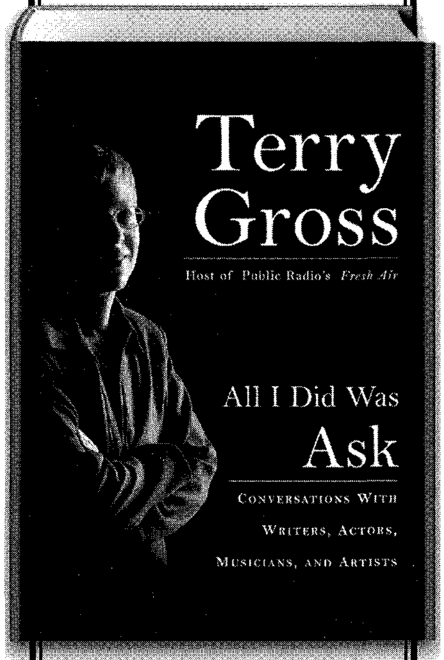
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AN AFRICAN TRAGEDY

Samantha Power's "Dying in Darfur" contains valuable reporting on the horrific killings in western Sudan by marauding government-supported militias (August 30th). As Power notes, Congress has labelled this killing spree "genocide." Her policy analysis, however, warrants comment. The article asserts that other countries have been less than eager to follow Washington in condemning the Sudanese government or to propose aggressive policy measures because of their dissatisfaction with the Bush Administration's Iraq policy. The sad fact is that most of the world has never been seized by the suffering in Sudan. The U.S., by providing billions of dollars of humanitarian aid since the nineteen-eighties, while leading peace efforts, has been in a league of its own. In contrast, the U.N. Security Council members China and Russia (and other countries) have been reluctant to criticize the human-rights records of others, not wanting to become targets themselves. They, along with France and other European nations, also have commercial interests in Sudan. These interests deserve attention, given the article's suggestion that Bush Administration policies have been motivated in part by a hope of paving the way for U.S. energy companies. In many hearings on Sudan that I have chaired, and in carrying out other oversight, I have seen no evidence of such an agenda. The Bush and Clinton Administrations' Sudan policies have been driven by a humanitarian motive: to stop the killing.

Representative Edward R. Royce
Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa
Washington, D.C.

A WAR TO REMEMBER

As a six-year-old in London in 1938, I recall clearly the ineffable sadness of the people about "the War," which led, of course, to the almost hysterical reaction to "Peace in our time" (A Critic at Large, August 23rd). Adam Gopnik asks how you can blame people "for getting something wrong when they could not have known it was going to go so wrong." Their military, at least, should have had a foretaste of what was to come after the disasters in the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Balkan Wars, which featured trenches, machine guns, and other horrors. And, as Gopnik writes, by 1916 it was clear that it had gone terribly wrong, that the war was destroying their civilization, yet the catastrophe was allowed to run its course. He writes that Prime Minister Asquith, "filled with sadness," went for a drive when the war began, leaving it to Lord Grey, his foreign secretary. But Grey, too, was aware of the pending tragedy; it is his foreboding words that we remember: "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

Paul Silverstone
New York City

Gopnik passes over one of the most profound consequences of the First World War: the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The random carving up of the Middle East by the French and the British against the inhabitants' interests is a good place to look in trying to shed light on many of today's crises.

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh
New York City

CORRECTION: The caption for the photograph accompanying Gopnik's piece gave an incorrect date for the first Battle of the Marne; it took place in September, 1914. The figures cited for the number of French soldiers killed by the end of August, 1914, and for the number of British soldiers killed in one day at the Battle of the Somme included the wounded; the correct fatality numbers are seventy-five thousand and nineteen thousand. Edward VII was Kaiser Wilhelm II's uncle, not his cousin.

•

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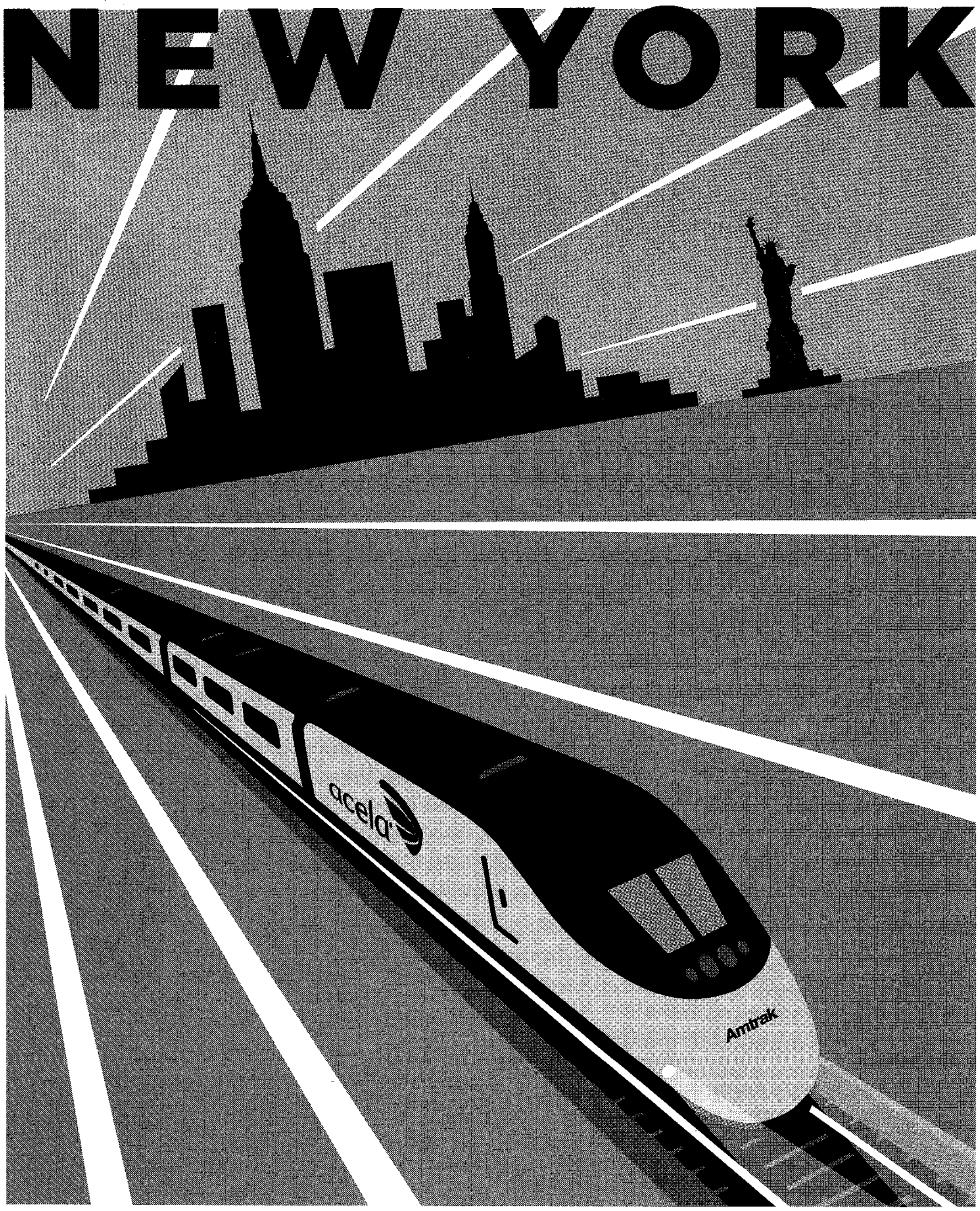

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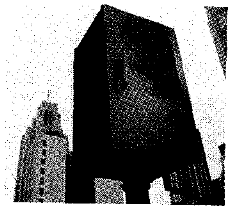
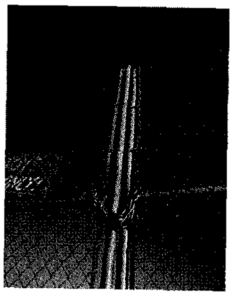
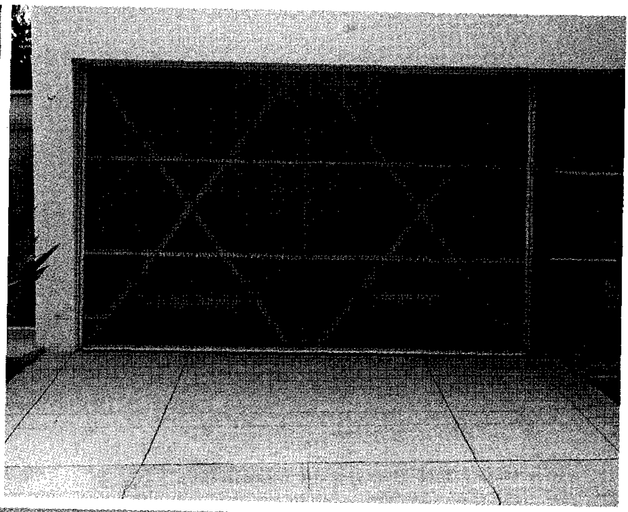
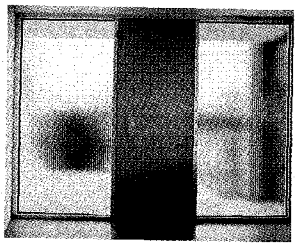
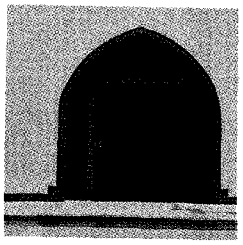
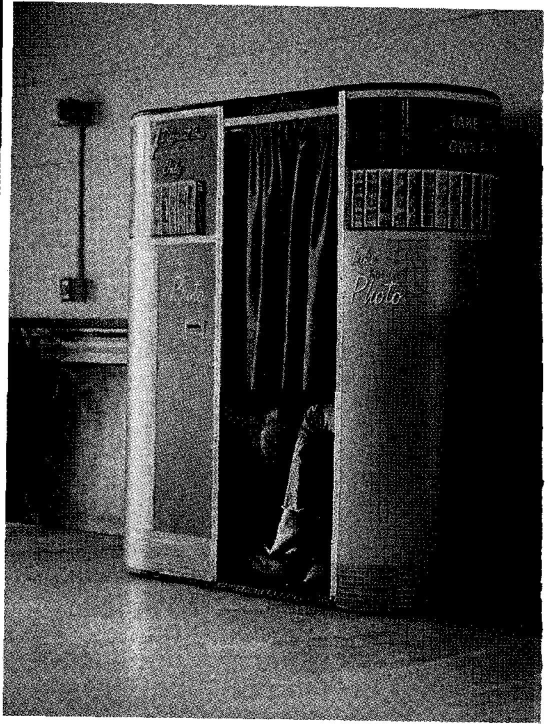
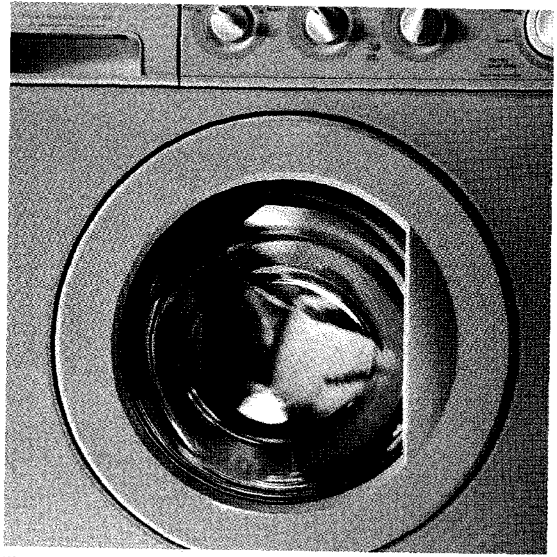
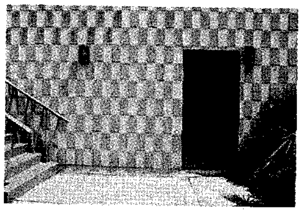
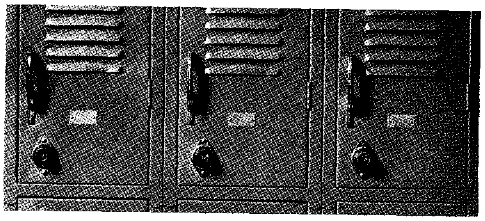
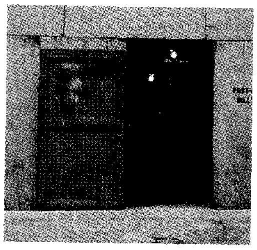
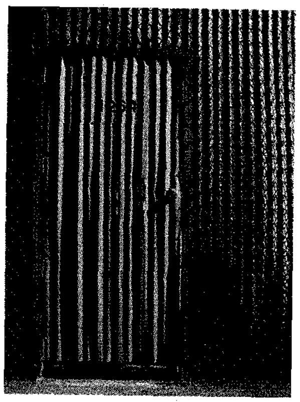
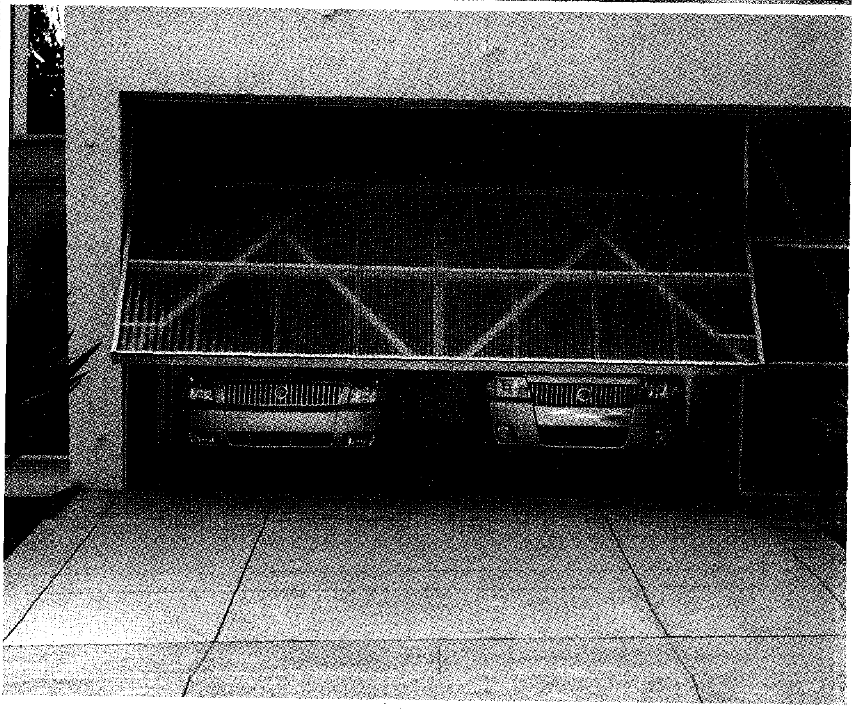
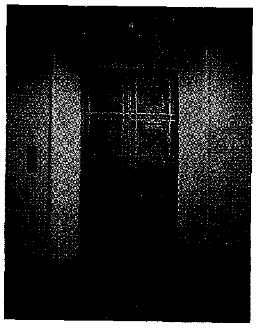
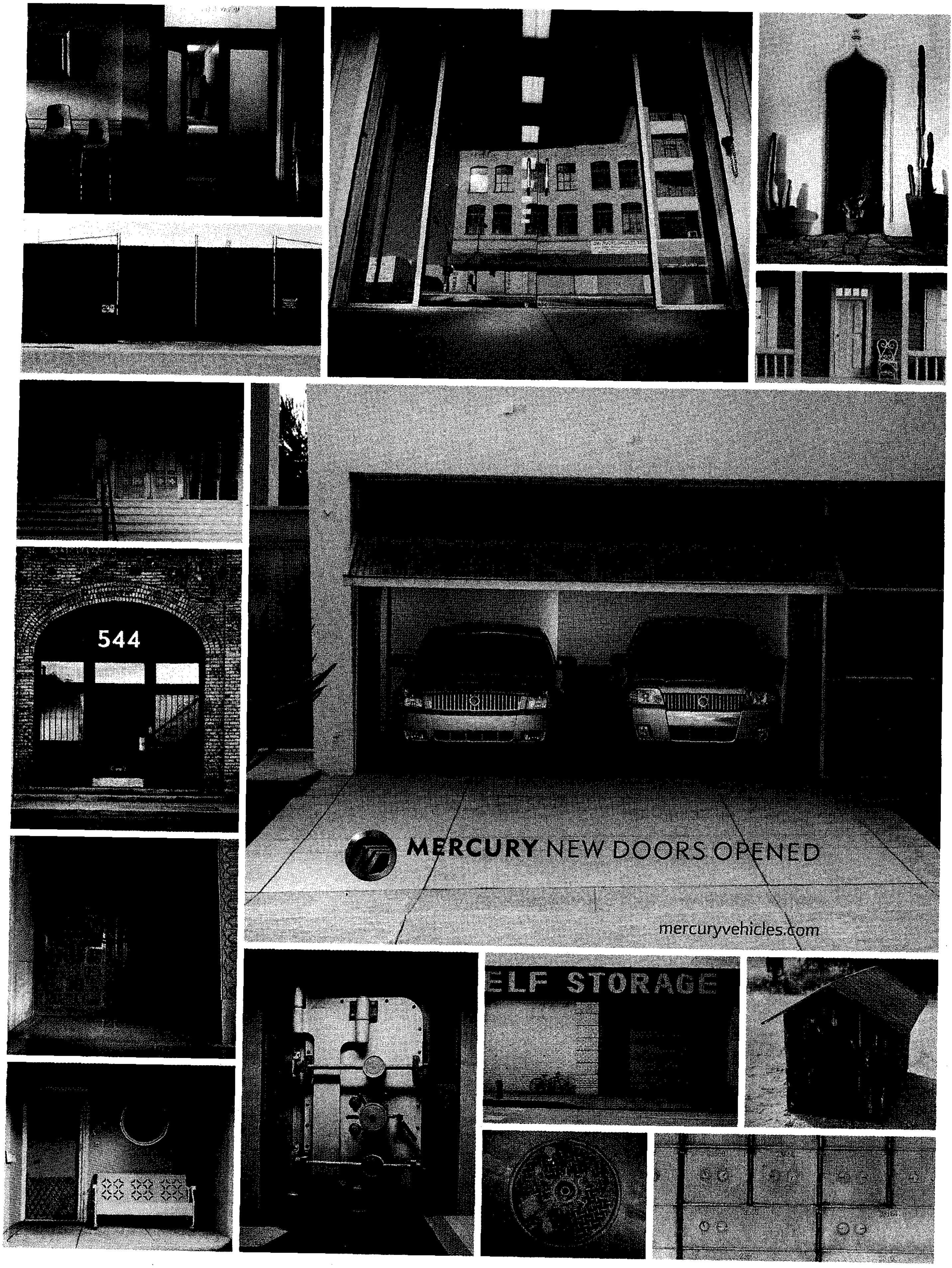







Behind every door,
there's another discovery.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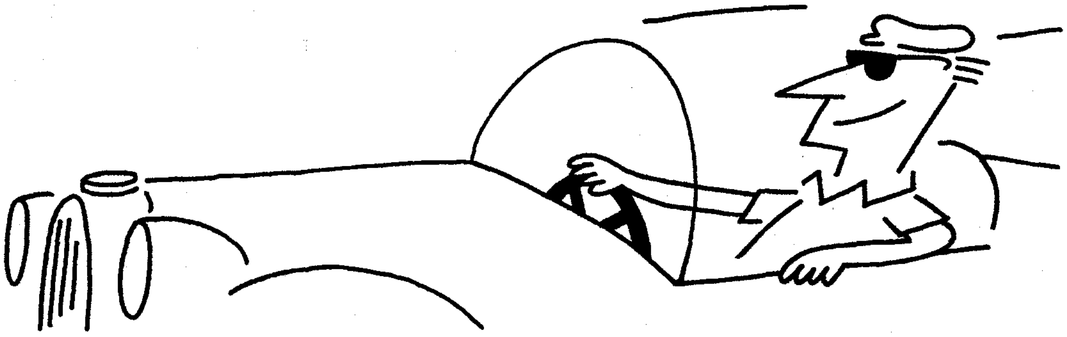

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THIS WEEK

THE VOICE OF FLAMENCO

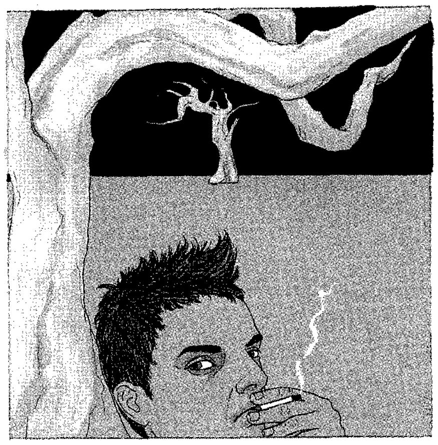
The young flamenco *cantaor* Rafael de Utrera seems to draw his song not just from the vaunted Andalusian soil but, on occasion, from the emergency ward. This is classic flamenco singing—with the wails, the pauses, the staring at the floor, the renewed howl—but guttier and, it seems, more spontaneous. When it's over, you need a drink. Utrera has accompanied some of flamenco's greatest dancers, and at a show at Joe's Pub, part of his first U.S. solo tour, he will have two dancers with him. (Sept. 14-15; see Night Life.)

UGO ROI

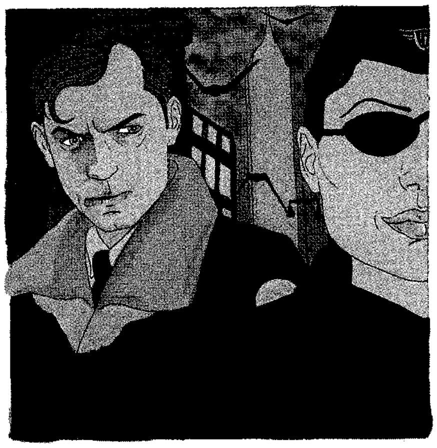
Ugo Rondinone, the versatile Swiss multimedia artist—he paints, takes photographs, sculpts, and makes videos—has a new show that transforms the Matthew Marks gallery into a kind of paradise of artifice and ambitious romanticism. Cast-resin olive trees and hanging reliefs line the walls; "Rain," a floor-to-ceiling construction of slanting chain link topped by masses of metallic clouds, divides the gallery in half; and "All Those Doors," a labyrinthine structure of black Plexiglas, emits the sounds of bells. (Opens Sept. 18; see Art.)

BLUE SCREENS AND BIG NAMES

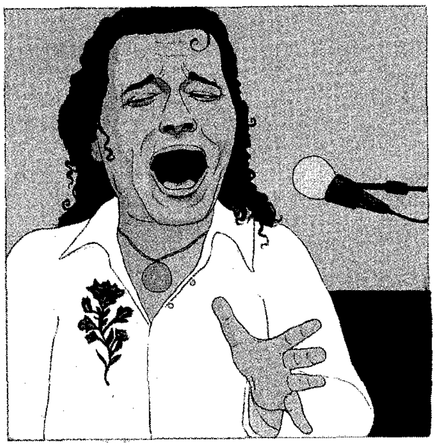
Kerry Conran's début as a writer and director, "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow"—which tells the story of a giant robot attack in a retro-futuristic New York City reminiscent of Fritz Lang's "Metropolis"—started as a six-minute short film that Conran painstakingly constructed and assembled on a computer in his Sherman Oaks, California, apartment over a four-year period. Conran had never been to New York; he digitally re-created the entire city with the help of old photographs and films. The final product, which combines real actors with computer-rendered backgrounds, boasts a cast that includes Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Angelina Jolie, and Giovanni Ribisi. (Opens Sept. 17; see Movies.)



The work of the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, at Matthew Marks.

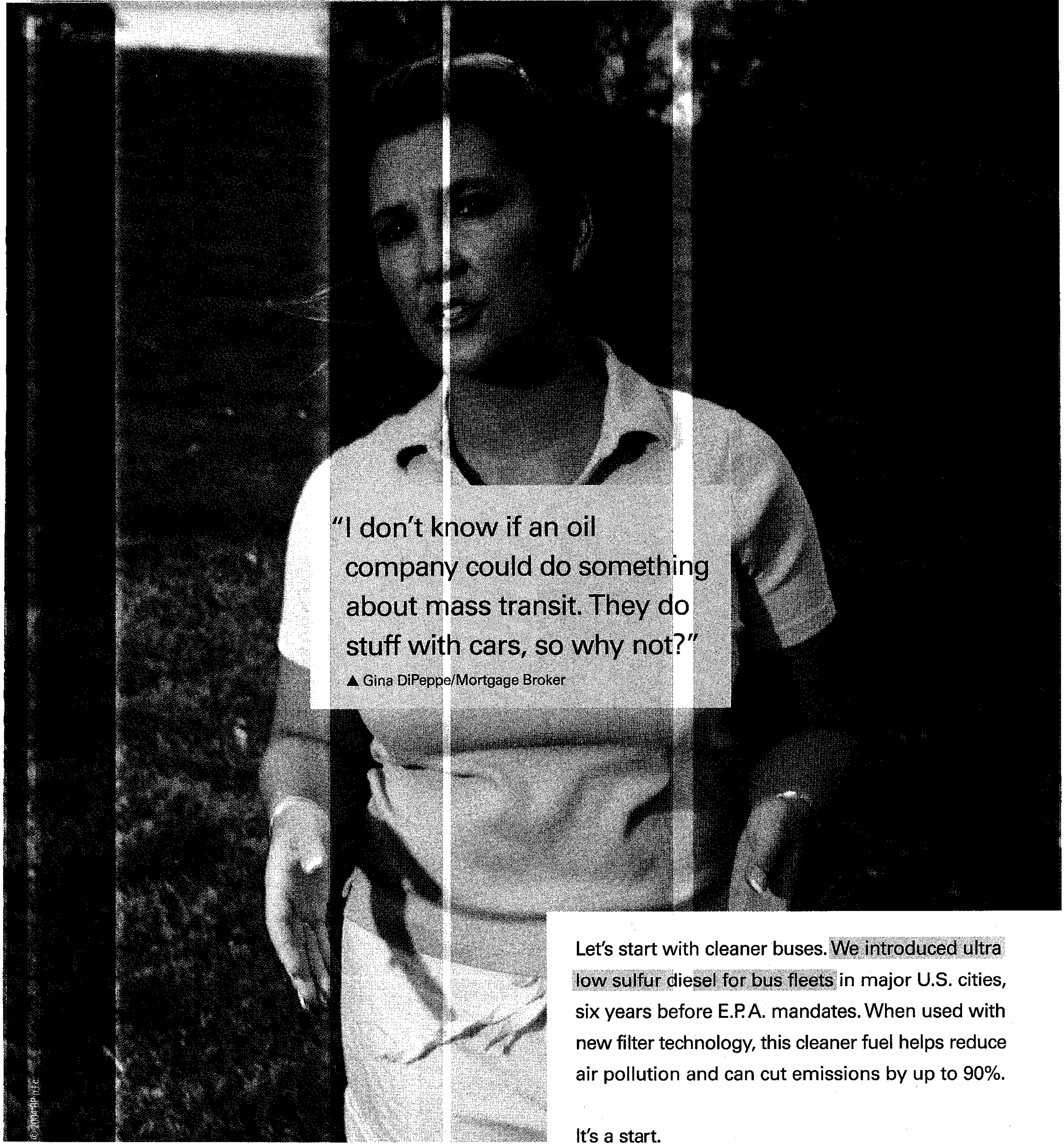


The computer-animated sci-fi epic "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow."



LARA TOMLIN

The gritty young flamenco singer Rafael de Utrera performs at Joe's Pub.



"I don't know if an oil company could do something about mass transit. They do stuff with cars, so why not?"

▲ Gina DiPeppe/Mortgage Broker

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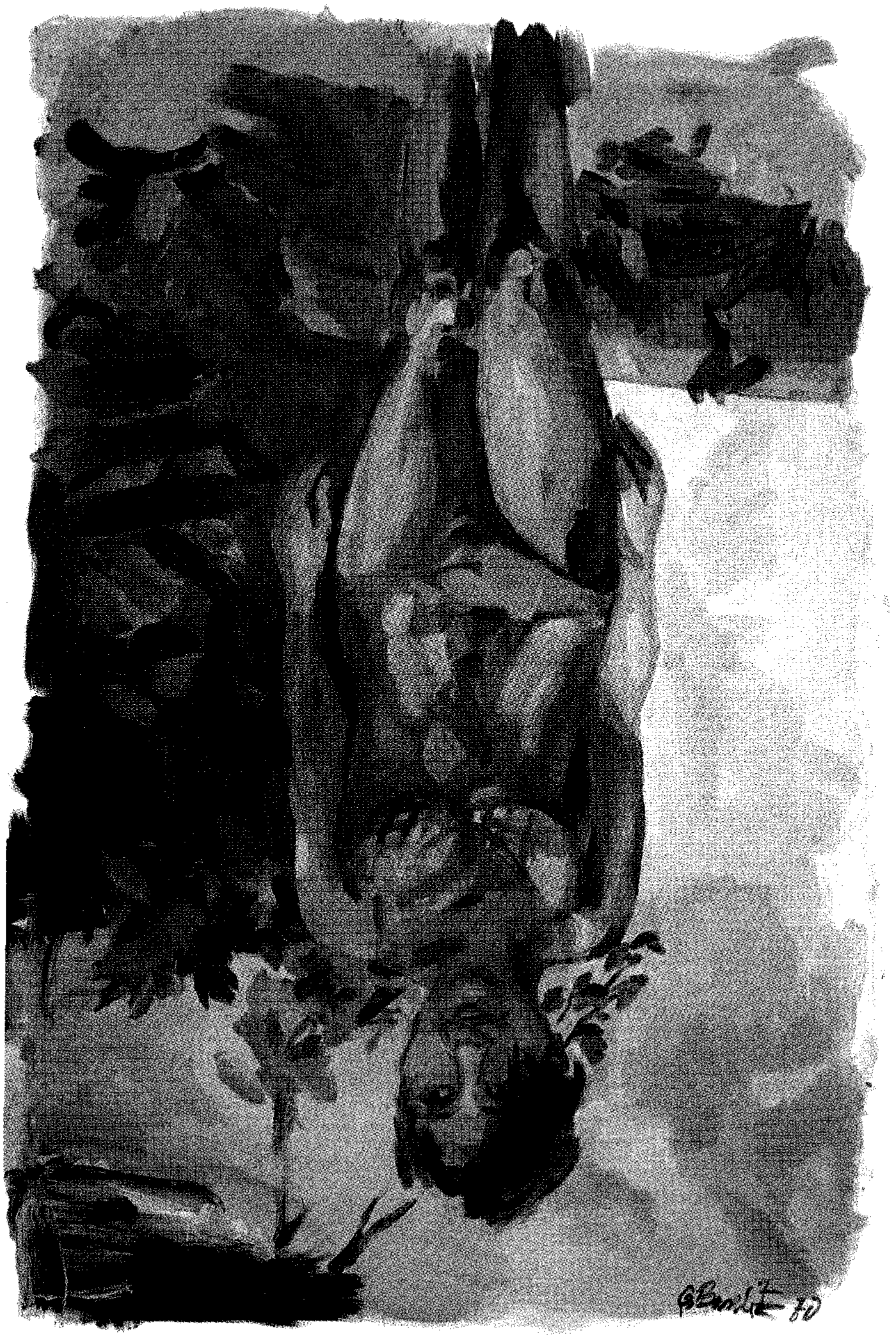


Georg Baselitz's inverted portraits and landscapes, at Gagosian uptown (see Art).

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ATLANTIC THEATRE COMPANY
The fall season opens with two one-act plays by Eugène Ionesco, "The Bald Soprano" and "The Lesson," in new translations by Tina Howe. Featured in the cast are John Ellison Conlee ("The Full Monty"), Michael Countryman, Seana Kofoed, Jan Maxwell, and Steven Skybell. Directed by Carl Forsman. In previews. Opens Sept. 19 at 7. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

FINER NOBLE GASES
A group of once successful rock musicians wallow in drugged-out apathy in an East Village apartment, in a play by Adam Rapp. Directed by Michael Garcés. In previews. Opens Sept. 20 at 8. (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl., west of Seventh Ave., between W. 11th and Perry Sts. 212-868-4444.)

HEDDA GABLER
The Flemish director Ivo van Hove, of Holland's Toneelgroep Amsterdam, brings his adaptation of Ibsen's play to New York Theatre Workshop. With sets by Jan Versweyveld. In previews. Opens Sept. 21 at 7. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

KIKI & HERB WILL DIE FOR YOU
The two-person act of the writer-performer Justin Bond and the pianist Kenny Mellman was described by our critic Alex Ross last year as "a slashingly funny, psychically unsettling entertainment—part cabaret, part rock and roll, part Victorian melodrama—to which the category of camp does not apply." The duo—Kiki, a boozy, garrulous, narcissistic chanteuse, and her doleful accompanist, Herb—come to Carnegie Hall for one final public meltdown. Sept. 19 at 8. (154 W. 57th St. 212-247-7800.)

LAST EASTER
M.C.C. presents a new play by Bryony Lavery ("Frozen"), about three people who take a terminally ill friend to Texas and Lourdes in search of a cure. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

NEW YORK MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
Some of Broadway's biggest talents, old and new (including Raúl Esparza, Kathleen Marshall, Bobby Lopez, Jeff Marx, and Scott Schwartz), are behind this new festival, which aims to do for new musicals what Sundance does for indie films. Three weeks of performances showcase thirty-one new musicals. "The Woman Upstairs," by Brian Lowdermilk and Kait Kerrigan, stars Kate Shindle as a New York woman in a feud with her downstairs neighbor; "The Altar Boyz" is a comedy about a Christian boy band, with songs by Gary Adler ("Avenue Q") and Patrick Walker and a book by Kevin Del Aguila. Opens Sept. 13. Through Oct. 3. (212-352-3101. For complete information on venues, performances, and show times, visit www.nymf.org.)

PEOPLE BE HEARD
Erica Schmidt ("Debbie Does Dallas") directs a new musical comedy, with songs by Quincy Long and music by Michael Roth, about a small town caught up in a heated debate about evolution. Choreographed by Peter Pucci. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

PUGILIST SPECIALIST
In a dark contemporary drama by San Francisco's Riot Group, first performed in Britain, four U.S. Marines plot to assassinate a Middle Eastern leader. Written by the group's co-founder, Adriano Shaplin. In previews. Opens Sept. 17 at 8:15. (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

ROSE RAGE
The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre performs an adaptation by Edward Hall and Roger Warren of Shakespeare's Henry VI trilogy. First developed and performed at England's Watermill Theatre, the production is set in a Victorian slaughterhouse. Throughout the play, a Greek chorus of masked butchers provides a dumb show of the abundant battles and beheadings, hacking at organs and intestines to heighten the visceral impact of the violence. The show is presented as a five-and-a-half-hour event, with an hour-and-fifteen-minute meal break in the middle, for those with sturdy appetites. Previews begin Sept. 17. Opens Sept. 19 at 2. (Duke on 42nd St. 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

STRING OF PEARLS
Antoinette LaVecchia stars in a Primary Stages production of a play by Michele Lowe about a necklace that disrupts the lives of the people who come in contact with it. Directed by Eric Simonson. In previews. (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

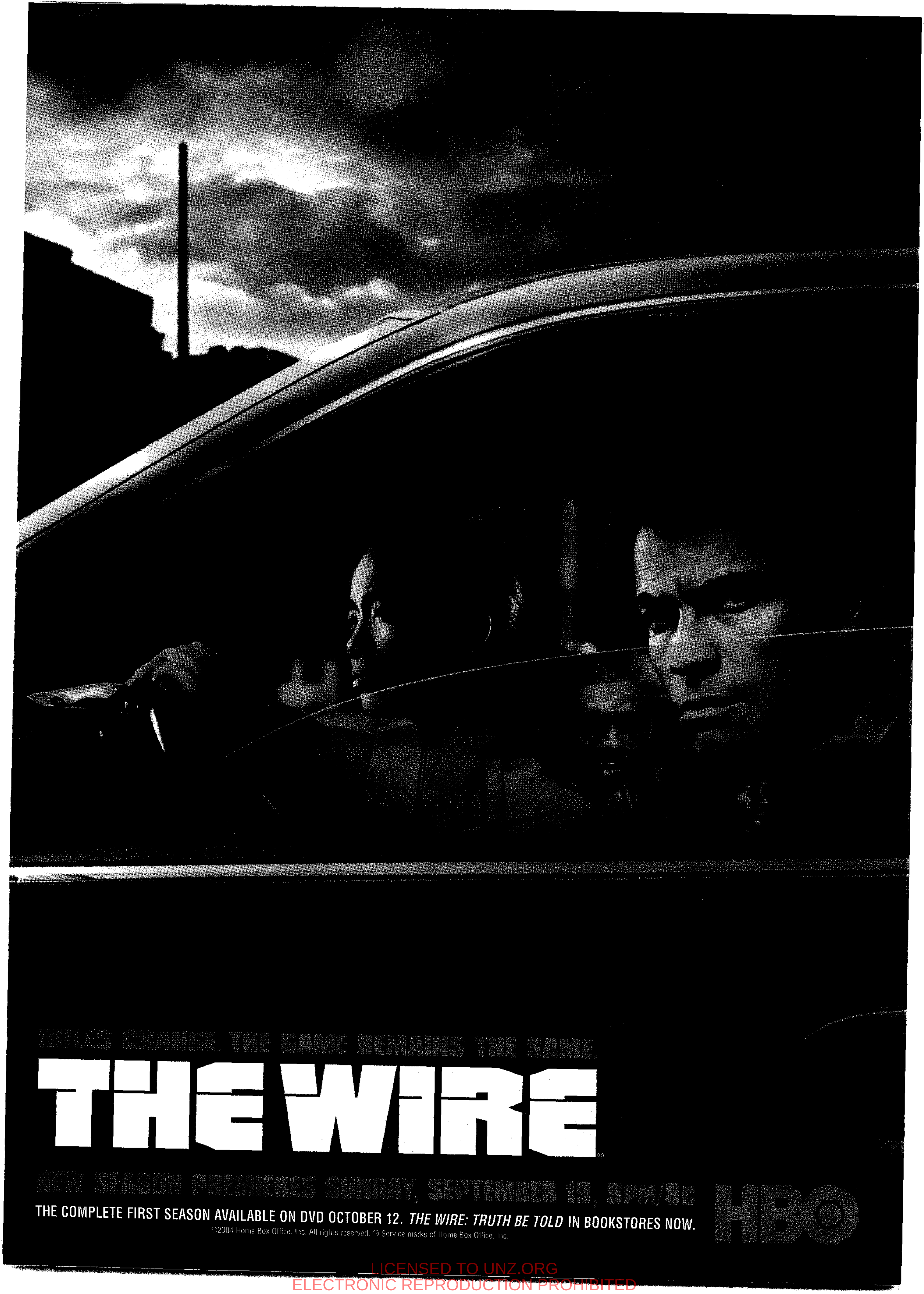
SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE
The puppeteer Basil Twist's dreamlike work—set to Berlioz's hour-long, five-movement composition and performed in a thousand-gallon glass tank—comes to the brand-new Dodger Stages. One preview on Sept. 15. Opens Sept. 16 at 8. (340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHITE CHOCOLATE
In a satirical play by the longtime *New Yorker* cartoonist William Hamilton, a white Park Avenue couple wake up and discover they've become black. Reg E. Cathey, Nora Dunn, and Lynn Whitfield lead the cast. Directed by David Schweizer. Previews begin Sept. 21. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BRIAN DYKSTRA: CORNERED & ALONE
Brian Dykstra says that his one-man show might have been called "Whips and Cheney" or "Rumsfeld and Coke," but he opted for a subtler approach. He warms up the crowd with Dr. Seuss-y hip-hop rhymes before letting loose with a bitterly funny barrage of home truths about the plight of American liberals in a country whose foreign policy, Dykstra observes, increasingly resembles a movie: "Predator vs. Alien." Directed by Margarett Perry. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.)

DAMES AT SEA
The Jean Cocteau Repertory revives a wartime movie-musical spoof from 1968. It features tap dancing and is set on two locations: in a theatre and on the deck of a battleship. With book and lyr-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ics by George Haimsohn and Robin Miller and music by Jim Wise. Directed by David Fuller. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-279-4200.)

DEAD PUPPET TALK
A meta-drama by Roman Paska (the director of the International Institute of Puppetry, in Charleville-Mézieres, France), in which puppets act out scenes while actors comment on their performances. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Through Sept. 18.)

DRACULA, THE MUSICAL
When he enters the stage, wearing a long maroon brocade robe with cascades of ruffles at his neck and cuffs, his hair swept into a high white pompadour, the old neck-biter (Tom Hewitt) looks like a demented granny. After his first blood feast, his hair turns raven black. This is the first in a stream of tricks (flying nymphets, sliding doors,pop-out breasts) that whiz by in this new musical, which has been paced to hold the attention of a *Buffy*-loving, television-watching audience. The show is not exactly boring: Kelli O'Hara, as Lucy, is fun to watch when she bares her fangs at a child; Melissa Errico, as Mina, sings well, but seems more zombie than vampirette; and Don Stephenson is funny as an insect-gulping madman. But it is exceedingly silly. With book and lyrics by Christopher Hampton and Don Black and music by Frank Wildhorn. Directed by Des McAnuff. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FIRST (AND LAST) MUSICAL ON MARS
In a show written, directed, and composed by George Zarr (who writes for television's Sci Fi Channel), an earthling who has been kidnapped by the king of Jupiter is ordered to produce a musical on Mars. If he fails, Earth will be destroyed. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-645-6910.)

GUANTÁNAMO: HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM
Victoria Brittain (a former foreign editor of the *Guardian*) and Gillian Slovo (the South African-born novelist) pull together a handful of stories about the men who have been imprisoned at Guantánamo Bay in the wake of 9/11, using interviews with detainees, letters, transcripts of political speeches, and lawyers' briefs. Harsh Nayyar gives a touching performance as the father of a prisoner; Jeffrey Brick plays a man whose sister died in the Twin Towers but who wishes he could buy innocent detainees a drink. In one of the spare production's rare light moments, Robert Langdon Lloyd, who first appears onstage as a conscientious British lord, does a turn as an implacable Donald Rumsfeld. Directed by Nicolas Kent and Sacha Wares. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

I LOVE PARIS
You get pretty much what you'd expect in Doug Field's tongue-in-cheek portrait of the socialite heiress Paris Hilton, which is performed by Kevin Shinick: a heaping portion of celebrity dish with no real surprises. Still, it's good dirty fun, and Shinick, who enters the stage in BVDs and a T-shirt, plays Hilton with amusing wide-eyed opacity. Directed by Timothy Haskell. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

MANFEST
The Obie-winning theatre company New Georges presents a two-week festival of short plays by women, written from the male perspective, which will run in rotating repertory. The playwrights include Trista Baldwin, Kirsten Greenidge, Betty Shamieh, Sonya Sobieski, Alice Tuan, and Sheri Wilner. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. Through Sept. 25.)

MEET THE REAL ERNEST SHACKLETON: A COMEDY ABOUT ANTARCTICA
A musical about the English explorer Ernest Shackleton—who was stranded on the Antarctic ice in his ship, the Endurance, for nearly two years—asks the following question: Did Shackleton make the trip to separate his wife from her suspected lover, a member of his crew? With songs by Terry Radigan and choreography by Ron Schwinn. Written and directed by Michael Christian. (Sande Shurin, 311 W. 43rd St., 6th fl. 212-868-4444. Through Sept. 26.)

THE OLDEST PROFESSION
The Signature Theatre Company's new season is dedicated to the works of Paula Vogel. It starts off with a comic drama, set during the early days of the Reagan Administration, about five aging bawds who struggle with arthritis and a diminishing clientele. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
In this seriocomic spectacle by the Russian clown Slava Polunin, hobo clowns perform existential antics, culminating in a giant paper snowstorm that blows across the stage and onto the audience. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.)

TABLES FOR TWO

FREEMAN'S
Freeman Alley at Rivington St. (212-420-0012)—Freeman's is the kind of restaurant that you think of when you think of New York, and yet it's not remotely like anyplace else. It sits at the end of a blind alley off Rivington Street, behind a subdued robin's-egg-blue door with a weathered knob. Inside, there is a taxidermy shop's worth of heads. Over a fireplace, a big white goose is frozen mid-flap; a small boar snarls on the wall; there is even a model of a human skull above the curved zinc bar.

The food is—in the words of a sweet waitress, who casts her eyes toward her employer, Will Tigertt, for confirmation—"early American Midwestern." Tigertt, who co-owns the restaurant with Taavo Somer, admits he's from Detroit but says, "It's a long story," dashing any hopes of hearing about ancestors and frontiers. In any case, the menu seems more nineteen-fifties country club or present-day gastropub than pioneer: avocado vinaigrette (half an avocado brimming with dressing); spinach salad, with bacon and pine nuts; a dreamy, thick artichoke dip, served with toast. (The breads are grainy and fresh, from a bakery in Long Island City.) For those really trying to gain weight, or to neutralize a bitter Negroni whisked together by the bartender, there are Devils on Horseback: rich nuggets of Stilton-stuffed prunes, wrapped in bacon and served burning hot. More subtle is the trout, delicately flavored with fresh thyme.

The brunch hour is peaceful at Freeman's. Light pours through a many-paned picture window, and the puddles in the alley gleam. This is the best time to appreciate the restaurant's innocence: the poached eggs nestled like throw pillows on a bed of watercress; the ungainly little blobs of lamb sausage; the pinecones strewn about for decoration; the juice glasses, placed on every table, that contain a child's arrangement of a daisy, a purple aster, and a stem of Queen Anne's lace. All of this goes a long way toward explaining how such a highly stylized place—crowded, despite its brand-newness and deliberate obscurity, with sophisticates—feels so improbably genuine. (Open weekdays for dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $8-$19.)

—Dana Goodyear

STRAIGHT ON 'TIL MORNING
The writer Trish Harnetiaux and the director Jude Domski, who collaborated last year on the quirky comedy "Inside a Bigger Box," reunite for a satirical update of "Peter Pan," set among Williamsburg scenesters who never want to grow up. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE WINTER'S TALE
Wooden O Productions presents a faithful production of Shakespeare's romance, in a short run at the Producers Club. (616 Ninth Ave., between 43rd and 44th Sts. 212-868-4444. Through Sept. 19.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.
BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
COOKIN'
Minetta Lane, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-420-8000.
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY SUMMER SHOCK!
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
THE FROGS
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.
GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
HERE LIES JENNY
Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.
I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
PICON PIE
DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.
PLUMS IN NEW YORK
Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. (Through Sept. 26.)
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 212-477-2477.
TOXIC AUDIO: LOUDMOUTH
Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.
WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

JOAQUÍN CORTÉS: "LIVE"
The Spanish flamenco pop icon keeps busy, with performances at the Oscars, the Grammys, and Nobel Prize ceremonies and with concerts in London, Athens, Hong Kong, and Puerto Rico, where he shared a bill with Jennifer Lopez. Expect stirring displays of technical proficiency, stirring displays of shirtlessness, a marvellous eighteen-piece orchestra that plays everything from classical and jazz to Afro-Cuban, Arabic, and gospel music, plus Gypsy ballads; and also expect a decidedly unfinicky vision of what constitutes modern flamenco. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Sept. 14-19 at 8.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
The versatile Limón dancers kick off the Joyce's fall season with two programs in rotating repertory. This week, "The Unsung," José Limón's all-male tribute to the American Indian, is paired with "Extreme Beauty," an all-female ensemble piece created by Susanne Linke that is having its world première. The evening concludes with Lar Lubovitch's "Concerto Six Twenty-Two." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Sept. 21 at 8. Through Oct. 3.)

DANCENOW/NYC
The tenth annual citywide dance festival continues, with performances by eighty-five emerging choreographers at the Joyce SoHo "Base Camp," including Dixie Fun Dance Theatre, Christine Suarez, Philippa Kaye Company, Dusan Tynek, and Will Swanson. The festival concludes Sept. 18 with a concert at the Joyce SoHo; free flamenco and modern-dance performances in a drained pool in Washington Heights; and a Dancemopolitan cabaret at Joe's Pub. The lineup at Joe's includes the splendidly inventive Keely Garfield, presenting a work in progress called "Disturbulence"; Sara Hook and Mary Cochran, with a political work called "Patriot Act-Up"; and Chris Elam's Misnomer Dance Theatre, performing "Three-Toed Tin Man." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St., Sept. 13-14 and Sept. 16-17 at 7 and 9 and Sept. 18 at 1; Highbridge Park Play Center, W. 173rd St. at Amsterdam Ave., Sept. 18 at 4; Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St., Sept. 18 at 9:30. For a full festival schedule, visit www.dancenownyc.org, or call 718-850-2488.)

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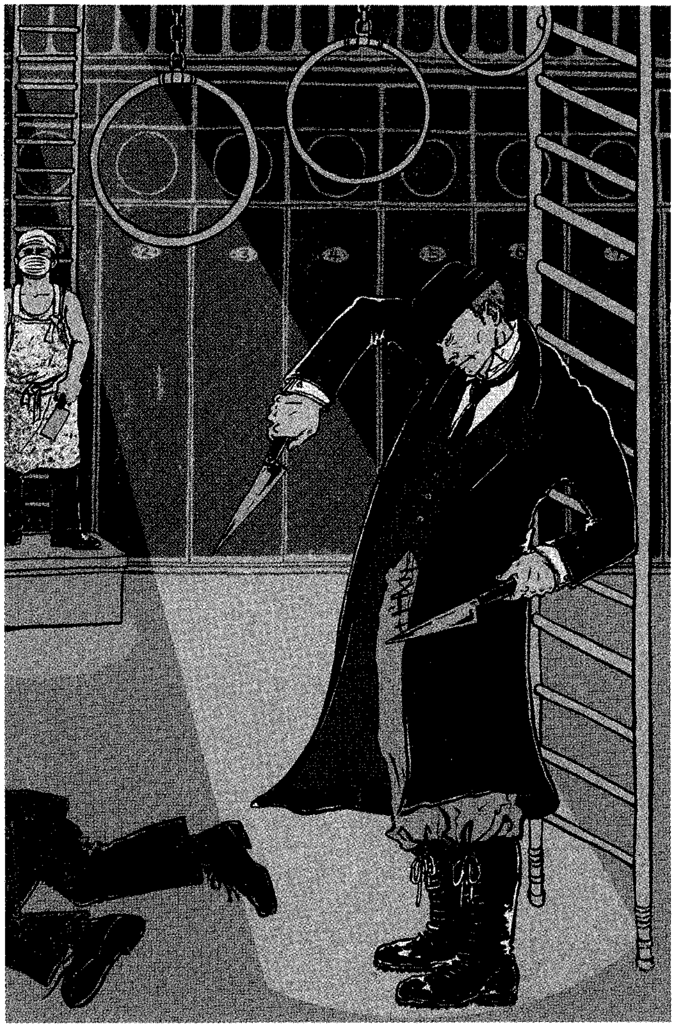
No purchase necessary. Trivia contest and sweepstakes is open to residents of the U.S. 18 or older as of 9/6/04. For complete rules, see the "On The Town" column of Delta's Rules and Regulations in this issue, or visit www.delta.com/nyc between 9/6/04 and 10/31/04. Contest void where prohibited.

DANZAISA
In "Dominata," a new work by the Curaçao-born choreographer Gabri Christa, a game of dominoes is played on a corner of the stage; tiles clack throughout the performance. When the game gets complicated, so does the dancing, flaring up in a fight, a sexual encounter, or a joke. Latasha N. Nevada Diggs, of Burnt Sugar Arkestra, accompanies the movement with songs ("post-human vocals," she calls them) and poems about the immigrant experience, on top of a taped jazz-fusion score. With a video backdrop by Marilys Ernst. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 15-18 at 7:30.)

"HERE TO NOW"
Alyce Finwall leads her Dance Council Movement Theatre in a concert of repertory pieces—"Hover the Electric Field" and "Sans Sanctum"—and new works, including the trio "Here to Now," a balletic piece called "Wenig Mehr," and "Shimple She," set to a sound score by Paul Choe that is influenced by Patti Smith, Rimsky-Korsakov's "Schéhérezade," the White Stripes, and the Streets. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 212-924-0077, ext. 2. Sept. 17 at 9 and Sept. 18 at 8.)

"TERRA INCOGNITA"
Rebecca Lazier's Terrain company presents new dances with synchronized leaps, sudden group formations on the ground, and unexpected facial expressions. "Mirth," a lively piece with a constantly shifting focus, was inspired by Lazier's toddler son; ". . . and Tea Was Served" is a murder mystery infused with a macabre whimsy reminiscent of Edward Gorey. "Transparent Body," accompanied live by Dan Trueman on electric violin, is more stately. With lighting by Aaron Copp. (Danspace Project at St. Marks In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Sept. 16-19 at 8:30.)

SACHIYO ITO AND COMPANY
One of many performances this year celebrating a century and a half of diplomatic ties between the United States and Japan, this concert of Japanese dance includes the kabuki favorite "Onatsu Kyoran" ("Onatsu the Insane"). Created by Shoyo Tsubouchi at the turn of the last century, it tells the story of a merchant's daughter who goes mad after her lover is burned at the stake. The program also includes the contemporary works "Night Pond," by Sachiyo Ito, and "Morning Song," by the Japanese choreographer Shogo Fujima (who makes a guest appearance in "Onatsu"), and two folk dances from Okinawa. (Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University. 212-346-1715. Sept. 18 at 8.)


Edward Hall's "Rose Rage" comes to the Duke on 42nd St.

YUKO SHIMIZU

"BEYOND THE DMZ"
A new dance-theatre work uses taped dialogue and photo projections to tell the story of a family torn apart by the separation of Korea into North and South. Created by the South Korean director Eun-Hee Kim and performed by his Sudden Enlightenment Theatre, with an international ensemble of dancers. Choreographed by Natasa Trifan. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 212-254-1109. Sept. 16-18 at 8 and Sept. 19 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

HEART
The Wilson sisters, Ann and Nancy, made music of considerable influence in the seventies; in the eighties, their slick, manufactured sound gave them their biggest hits. After a decadelong absence from the studio, the sisters recently recorded an album of guitar-driven rock, "Jupiters Darling," that recalls their early, more innovative work. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Sept. 15 at 8.)

WILLIAMSBURG JAZZ FESTIVAL
Cheap and adventurous music thrives in the outer boroughs, as this second annual gathering proves. Highlights follow. Sept. 16: The Latin-jazz trumpeter **Ray Vega** (iO Restaurant and Lounge, 119 Kent Ave., at N. 7th St., Brooklyn). Sept. 17: The guitarist and singer **Howard Fishman** (iO Restaurant and Lounge) and the intelligent saxophonist **Chris Potter** (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Brooklyn). Also on Sept. 17: The dramatic young singer **Nellie McKay** (Laila Lounge, 113 N. 7th St., Brooklyn). Sept. 18: The fleet-fingered pianist **Eric Reed** (iO Restaurant and Lounge). (For more information about the festival, visit www.wjazzfestival.com.)

BROOKLYN NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL
This fledgling festival spreads its shows out over five neighborhoods. There are a number of local soul, rock, and jazz acts on the schedule—including **Chocolate Genius, Suffrajett,** and **Shrine for the Black Madonna**—as well as a panel discussion about the music business (see Above and Beyond). (For details on show times and venues, see www.seedsandbones.com. Sept. 16-19.)

PHIL COLLINS
The veteran British performer plies his radio-friendly songs at Madison Square Garden. (212-307-7171. Sept. 17-18 at 8.)

"PARK SLOPE OLD-TIME & BLUEGRASS JAMBOREE"
Now in its seventh year, this party brings the sounds of Kentucky to a manicured corner of Brooklyn for a series of workshops, jam sessions, and concerts. The headliners include **James Reams** (a Kentucky native and a twenty-year resident of the city, and the force behind the event), on Sept. 17 at 8, and **Rafe Stefanini,** an Italian fiddle master who fell in love with Southern music and moved to this country some two decades ago, on Sept. 18 at 7:40. (Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, 53 Prospect Park W., at 2nd St. For more information, call 718-768-2972.)

"THE ROCK ACCORDION SUMMIT OF NEW YORK CITY"
How do these things slip through the cracks? This is the *second* annual night of electrifying squeezebox players. The acts include **Benjamin Ickies, the SOBs, Flaming Fire,** and others out to prove that there's a place for the accordion in the indie-rock world. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 646-541-7781. Sept. 18 at 8.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Sept. 19 at 3: An afternoon of music from Jamaica and Louisiana closes out the summer season. **Burning Spear** (a.k.a. Winston Rodney), one of reggae's prime Rasta prophets, and the **New Birth Brass Band,** straight out of New Orleans, do the honors. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Sept. 15: **Edguy,** a German heavy-metal band with a penchant for pomp, circumstance, and pageantry, is not afraid to wear the clichés of the genre on its sleeve. Sept. 18: The saxophonist and Bruce Springsteen associate **Clarence Clemons** and the Temple of Soul. Sept. 19: The neo-soul of **Anthony Hamilton** and **Angie Stone.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Sept. 17: The New Jersey band **Monster Magnet** plays full-throttle rock that is knowingly ridiculous and earnestly brutal. They favor odes to hallucinogens, sex, and adolescent sci-fi stories. Sept. 18: The durable and endearing Scottish indie-pop band **Trashcan Sinatras** recently released "Weightlifting," their first American record in more than a decade.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Sept. 16: The **Thrills.** Last year this Irish group proudly displayed their taste for the music of California from the sixties and seventies on their début album, "So Much for the City." Their second record, "Let's Bottle Bohemia," carries on in a similar vein. Sept. 17: Southern rock with the **Drive-By Truckers. Allison Moorer,** Shelby Lynne's kid sister, is the opening act.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Sept. 14-15: **Rafael de Utrera** (see This Week). Sept. 21: **Kiran Ahluwalia,** who was born in northern India and raised outside of Toronto, is not well known here, but she recently won a Juno Award, Canada's version of the Grammy, for her album "Beyond Boundaries." It is a moving collection of *ghazals* and Punjabi folk songs, which she'll be performing here.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Sept. 15: The intense blues-rock guitarist **Chris Whitley.** Sept. 16: **Macha** distin-

guishes itself from other indie-rock bands by incorporating Indonesian folk touches. Sept. 21: The enigmatic Japanese psychedelia band **Ghost.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Sept. 15: **Tommy Stinson,** the tall, goofy former Replacements bassist, shows off his latest solo act. With **Alien Crime Syndicate.**

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—Sept. 15: The three-piece **Runner and the Thermodynamics** honed their seventies power-pop on the Boston bar circuit. They have a drummer who likes to emulate Keith Moon and a reputation for electrifying live shows.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Sept. 15: **Jucifer** is Amber Valentine and Edgar Livergood, two rock-and-roll devotees from Athens, Georgia. He drums like a madman and she tears at her guitar and howls like the proverbial scorned woman. And like other more celebrated two-piece boy-girl bands, Jucifer eschews technology in favor of old-fashioned sweat and labor. Sept. 17: Led by the brothers Jean and Richard Shepherd, New York City's **Radio Mundial** fuses Latin rhythms, funk, soul, and reggae. Sept. 18: **Allison Moorer** (see Irving Plaza).

SPIRIT
530 W. 27th St. (212-268-9477)—Sept. 15: **Salif Keita,** the albino singer from Mali who first achieved renown with the folk-rumba group Les Ambassadeurs, has become one of West Africa's most popular musical exports. Like the Senegalese star Youssou N'Dour, he has used his international cachet to entice some noted Western musicians, including Wayne Shorter and Carlos Santana, onto his records. Although Keita sings in Bambara, his fluid, sensuous singing needs no translation.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Sept. 17: Seattle's fearsome **Melvins,** arguably the original grunge band, were a huge influence on the more commercially successful Nirvana. The band specializes in pavement-cracking guitar rock that's laced with demonic vocals.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Oct. 2: The vocalist **Stacey Kent** offers a program of songs by the likes of Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and Lerner and Loewe.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wrap-around murals, and, starting Sept. 17, **Dixie Carter,** of the television show "Designing Women." Cabaret is her passion, and she expresses it with a wide-ranging repertoire and good humor.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Sept. 19: "Bass Extremes." **Victor Wooten,** of Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, **Oteil Burbridge,** of the Allman Brothers, and **Steve Bailey,** a low-end master, give their electric instruments a good workout. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through Sept. 19: The sexy cabaret singer **Ute Lemper** possesses a unique vocal strength and interpretative imagination. She's performing her own songs here. Sept. 20-25: **Madeleine Peyroux.** Eight years ago Peyroux released her first album, "Dreamland," a bewitching blend of Billie Holiday-esque sass and country-and-Western spunk. "Careless Love," the long-awaited follow-up album, has just come out.

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Sept. 18: The **Cecil Bridgewater** trio. Max Roach's onetime right-hand man is a triple threat. As a trumpeter, arranger, and composer, he brings more than three decades of mainstream modern-jazz smarts to the stage.

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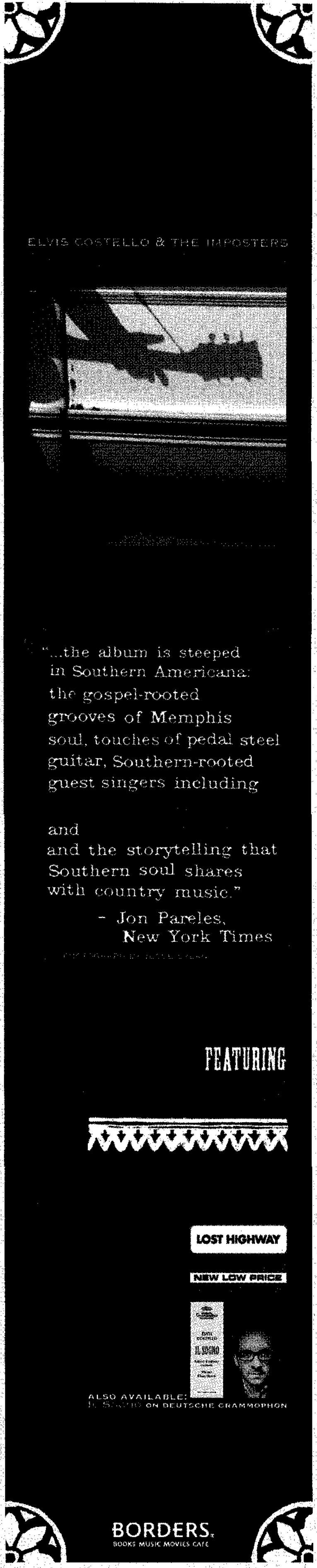
ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS

"...the album is steeped
in Southern Americana:
the gospel-rooted
grooves of Memphis
soul, touches of pedal steel
guitar, Southern-rooted
guest singers including

and
and the storytelling that
Southern soul shares
with country music."
- Jon Pareles,
New York Times

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JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Sept. 16-19: Some thirty years ago, the saxophonist Ornette Coleman introduced "harmolodics," a revolutionary way of combining harmony, melody, and rhythm. Among his collaborators were the guitarist **James Blood Ulmer,** the bassist **Jamaaladeen Tacuma,** and the drummer **Calvin Weston.** The passing of time has not made the homegrown theory any less bewildering, but this reunion should prove that it's still a source of stirring music.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—The saxophonist and flutist **Sonny Fortune** (here with his quartet Sept. 17-18) is enjoying a commanding second act. Hard bop and free bop commingle in his now classic style.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Sept. 19: **Mark Turner** is a tenor saxophonist to watch; he has a distinctive sound that is free from any obvious influences. He's part of a stripped-down trio called Fly that features the bassist **Larry Grenadier** and the drummer **Jeff Ballard.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—When Rodin was commissioned to sculpt Balzac, the writer had been dead for forty-one years, and Rodin hired an unknown man from Tours, Balzac's birthplace, as a model. The subsequent jowly terracotta head is included in **"Artists' Artists,"** a gathering of portraits of and by artists. Picabia depicts Stieglitz as a stylized camera, and Jacques Villon imagines his brother Marcel Duchamp as a kind of " 'Nude Descending the Staircase' While Reading a Book." Larry Rivers, meanwhile, pictures John Ashbery as a homunculus floating in a cloud of words, the poet's own "Oleum Misericordiae." Through Nov. 7. ♦ **"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany"** gathers a hundred and fifty photographs from Sander's catalogue of Germans—including "Composer," "Pastrycook," "Member of Hitler Youth," "Peddler," "Match Seller," and "Gypsy"—taken between 1911 and 1952. Sander worked through the war years, but his project was not a favorite of the Nazis, who impounded a book of the photographs in 1936 and destroyed the plates. Under the category "Political Prisoners," there's a portrait of the photographer's son Erich in a cell, and under "The Last People," a photograph of Erich's death mask. The project inspired Steichen's "Family of Man" as well as chillier Becher and Struth prints shown in an adjacent gallery. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Art, Form, and Function of Gilt Bronze in the French Interior."** Through Feb. 20. ♦ **"Art Deco Paris."** Through Feb. 27. ♦ **"German Drawings and Prints from the Weimar Republic (1919-33)."** Through Oct. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—A sculptor who went AWOL from the gallery scene more than thirty years ago makes her triumphant return in **"Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective."** Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Tall Buildings"** documents twenty-five recent skyscraper designs with photographs, models, diagrams, and blueprints. Through Sept. 27. ♦ A two-part installation, **"Cut Outs"** and **"Suspended Seams,"** was made by Jean Shin from the MOMA staff's cast-off clothing. Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Humble Masterpieces,"** a collection of a hundred and twenty-two objects either drawn from the museum's collection (such as a Post-it note) or under consideration for acquisition (such as M&M's). Through Sept. 27. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Mondrian to Ryman: The Abstract Impulse."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985"** is a teeming retrospective of photographs, films, paintings, drawings, and objects from the brief career of the Cuban-born artist, who died in 1985, at the age of thirty-six. Espousing Body Art, the style of theatricalized narcissism that got Chris Burden shot in the arm, Mendieta used her own attractive form to make and receive painted marks and to undergo such improvised rituals as standing naked and being spattered with the blood of a freshly decapitated chicken. Outdoors, she dug holes, fashioned mounds, and built armatures—which were set afire—in the shapes of crude female figures. Her art's air of primitive fetish, myth, and mystery is pungent enough, but thin. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha"** and **"Ed Ruscha and Photography."** Through Sept. 26. ♦ **"Memorials of War."** Through Nov. 28. ♦ **"Evidence of Impact: Art and Photography 1963-1978."** Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler's **"Single Wide"** traffics in rural noir, mixing Gregory Crewdson-style images with crisp stock soundtrack noises (ticking clocks, dripping water, a barking dog) à la Janet Cardiff. The camera circles around and through a trailer home at night as a distraught woman drives a pickup truck into the kitchen, then emerges, bleeding, from the wreckage. The video loops continuously, making the wrecked trailer suddenly whole again and returning the undamaged pickup to its portentous revving in the yard. The nonlinear narrative film does not break new ground, but the nocturnal dreamscape is seductive. Through Oct. 22. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors."** Through Jan. 9. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Masterpieces of American Jewelry."** Through Jan. 23. ♦ **"Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan."** Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Faster, Cheaper, Newer, More: Revolutions of 1848."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ **"FutureShack,"** an industrial shipping container conceived by the Australian architect Sean Godsell as refugee-camp housing. Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3; and, for the duration of the Modigliani show, Sundays, 10 to 9. The museum will close at 3 on Sept. 15 and will be closed Sept. 16-17 for Rosh Hashanah.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—In **"Don't Call It Performance,"** works by twenty-four artists are shown in continuous loops on four screens, with an entirely new roster of artists on view starting Sept. 29. Highlights in the first half include Ricardo Zulueta's Nauman-flavored video from 1995, in which he alternates between dead-eyed lethargy and the mad gesticulations of someone who couldn't be happier to see you; documentation of Yael Davids's head enclosed in a glass tank of water in "Aquarium"; and Yan Duyvendak's "My Name Is Neo (for

Fifteen Minutes)" in which the leather-clad artist stands in a gallery and imitates every move Keanu Reeves makes in a segment of "The Matrix," his one-sided fight falling woefully, wonderfully short of the C.G.I. standard exemplified on the screen behind him. Through Nov. 7. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—The vast and lush grounds of the botanical garden, now deep in their late-summer abundance of daylilies, orchids, roses, and lavender, are twenty-two minutes from Grand Central on the Harlem local line. **"Waterlilies and Lotus: A Summer Aquatic Exhibition"** is back in the conservatory's courtyard for a second year. Blue-bodied dragonflies light on bulrushes and cattails, and the orange shadows of goldfish cruise by lilies with names like Wood's Blue Goddess, the Star of Siam, and the Prickly Waterlily, whose semi-submerged blossoms recall Audrey II from "Little Shop of Horrors." The star of the show, though, is the Giant Waterlily of the Amazon, a night-blooming behemoth whose pads can grow up to seven feet in diameter. The temperature inside its flowers can be eighteen degrees warmer than the surrounding air, drawing the attention of the beetles that pollinate and propagate them. Through Sept. 19. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"If Elected: Campaigning for the Presidency"** and **"Campaigns on Cotton."** A pair of intertwined exhibits. The more general half traces the evolution of personality-based national campaigns through artifacts like William Harrison's 1840 promotions featuring hard cider (his favorite drink), the cheerily overoptimistic 1864 jingle "McClellan Will Be President," "Win with Taft" matchbooks from 1908, Wendell Willkie chewing gum, and a cotton dress printed all over with the word "IKE." The exhibit of textiles consists mostly of bandannas and scarves; the earliest is a calico handkerchief circa 1776 depicting George Washington on a horse, his sword drawn, surrounded by decorative clusters of flags, weapons, and flowers. Through Nov. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
12 Fulton St., at Water St. (212-748-8600)—This institution's exhibitions now stretch over nine ships, four storefronts, and a twisty warren of galleries above a new reception space. The show at the latest gallery to open along the Schermerhorn Row labyrinth is **"Nieuw Amsterdam: Dutch New York as Represented in the Archaeological Collections of South Street Seaport Museum."** It includes revealing relics of china and metal, raised from sites like the seventeenth-century Haie/Van Tienhoven privies, outhouses of the city's Dutch settlers—the domestic landfills of another age. Another new exhibit, **"Soundings: Treasures of the Collections of South Street Seaport Museum,"** gathers scrimshaw carvings of technological marvels—the Atlantic Telegraph Station, for instance—model ships built from chicken bones, and the detritus of city businesses. (Open daily, 10 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Figuratively,"** a showcase of work by Dave McKenzie, William Villalongo, and Wangechi Mutu, the museum's three artists-in-residence for 2003-04. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Seeds and Roots: Selections from the Permanent Collection."** Through Sept. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

GEORG BASELITZ
Paintings from 1969-71, all inverted portraits and landscapes that were part of Baselitz's effort to change the way viewers considered form and perspective. Through Oct. 30. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313.)

JOAN BROWN
Give a kid a giant cardboard box and some poster paint, and you'll get back a car, a robot, or a puppet theatre complete with trompe-l'oeil curtains. Joan Brown's early-seventies sculpture applies this happy-go-lucky aesthetic to grownup subjects like cigarettes and married couples; the result is a silly, bouncy pageant of Pop-art toys reminiscent of Red Grooms and Claes Oldenburg. Through Sept. 29. (Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 212-644-5665.)

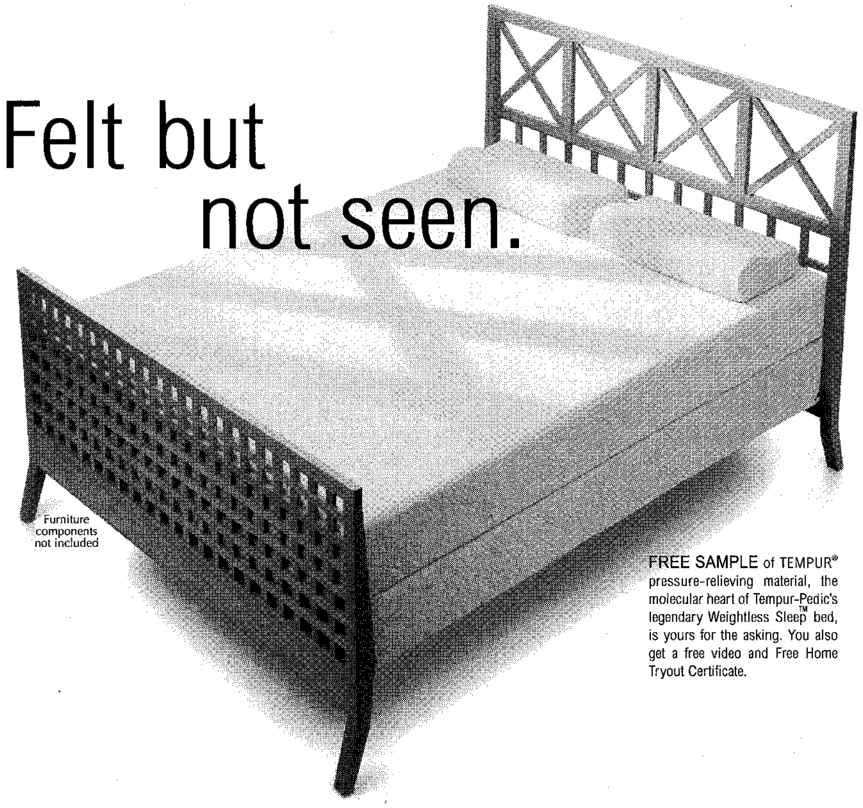
DANIEL JOSEPH MARTINEZ
A new sculptural installation, "The House America Built," fills the gallery. It's modelled on the Montana hideout of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, and decorated with Martha Stewart house paints. Through Oct. 2. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

JOAN MITCHELL
The colorful, exuberant Expressionism of Mitchell's painted canvases is evident in lithographs made in 1981 and in 1992, the year she died. Drawing with tusche or litho-crayon directly on aluminum plates (one plate for every color; each print here averages around four), Mitchell created large, abstract compositions with thick, gestural lines conjuring trees, flowers, and riverbanks. Two versions of "Bedford" cover the paper with thickets of colorful markings, while the "Sunflower" diptychs include arabesque lines that mimic the characters in Oriental script. Mitchell challenges notions of the print as small and precious by offering works on paper that are ambitious and expansive. Through Oct. 9. (Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 212-397-0669.)

GRACIE SQUARE ART SHOW
Almost a hundred artists will be showing (and selling) their art for two days to benefit Carl Schurz Park. Sept. 18-19 from 10 to 5. (86th St. at East End Ave. For more information, call 212-459-4455.)

Short List

"THE BODY PROJECT"
Winston Wächter, 39 E. 78th St.
212-327-2526. Through Sept. 25.



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"Christ Is the Answer," in a show of works by Alessandra Sanguinetti, at Milo.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

STEPHEN ANDREWS / JERRY MORIARTY
Two new shows, curated by Atom Egoyan and Art Spiegelman, respectively. Andrews rubs crayon over screens to depict scenes from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; Moriarty paints surreal narratives of suburban anomie. Through Oct. 16. (CUE Art Foundation, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-3583.)

GEORG BASELITZ
A gathering of recent figurative sculpture, a complement to the show of Baselitz's paintings at the uptown gallery. Through Oct. 30. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

MICHAEL CLOUD
Paintings and collages by a young artist with a fondness for composing with mathematical principles. His carefully arranged designs and patterns are executed with expressionistic brushwork and overlaid with lush materials like silver leaf. Through Oct. 2. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999.)

ALLAN MC COLLUM
McCollum is known for offering deadpan Conceptualist rebuttals to modernist abstraction. His "Perpetual Photos"—black-and-white images derived from out-of-focus photographs of television screens—look a bit like Minor White with their grainy fields marked by shadow and light; they also recall the subliminal images in liquor ads. Drawings from the "Kansas and Missouri Topographical Model Donation Project" are a greater challenge to the poker face of formalism. These silhouettes of the outlines of the two hundred and twenty counties in the heartland look like miniature Reinhardt or Ryman abstractions—they also recall McCollum's "Plaster Surrogates," from the early eighties—but wall texts place them firmly in the realm of the real world. Through Oct. 2. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

ALEJANDRO MAZÓN
The Cuban-born Mazón reportedly doesn't appreciate comparisons with Frida Kahlo, but his paintings beg the allusion. His fever dream is more art historical, but his rich palette and naïve realism are pure Kahlo. Duelling knights are paired with a bouquet of spoons; a van Eyck-inspired lady cradles a squirrel in her arms; birds worthy of a Bosch allegory are framed by sensual plants and flowers. Fragments of wallpaper, upholstery, origami, newspapers, and books serve as surfaces for fanciful compositions with titles such as "Lunch with a Porcupine," "Goya with Flight Chart in My Studio," and the more pointedly contemporary "Buenos Días Señor Bush." Through Oct. 2. (Billis, 511 W. 25th St. 212-645-2621.)

SIMONE SHUBUCK / PHOEBE WASHBURN
Shubuck's drawings seem dashed off and quirky, but closer inspection reveals an obsessive, polished draftsmanship. Groups of birds and floral motifs are interlaced with Cartier bracelet designs and fields of fluttering eyes. Silly hand-scrawled texts function like conversations between the artist and her alter ego. Shubuck's idiosyncratic graphics nevertheless hold their own against the sublime onslaught of Washburn's front-room installation, painted strips of wood nailed into a layered mass that looks like either a favela architectural model or a bookstore after an earthquake. Through Oct. 2. (LFL, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

WALTER THOMPSON
"Paintings" made with corrugated cardboard. The show is called "Corrugated Fields," and it draws heavily from the lozenge, chevron, and triangulated compositions of color-field painting. "Like . . . Passing in the Night" recalls Ad Reinhardt's sombre abstractions, and "White Triangle with Shadow," which almost slides down the wall onto the floor, is reminiscent of Kenneth Noland. A number of works have been slathered with a crayon-and-gel mixture that turns them pastel, but the best leave the cardboard naked, as it were, emphasizing the rugged plain-brown surface and the simple geometry of the corrugations. Through Sept. 25. (Amos Eno, 530 W. 25th St. 212-226-5342.)

"SIGN OF THE COVENANT"
There is one particularly offensive image here, a faux-naïf depiction of a rape scene that badly misjudges the context of the group show and makes the rest of the work look not only sordid but stupid. Much of it deserves such a neighbor—sophomorically impertinent pissing putti, Delft textile patterns turned into tableaux of snuff violence, etc. It is too bad for Jarrod Beck's delicate pencil drawings of disembodied facial features that they find themselves in such company. Through Sept. 25. (John Connelly Presents, 526 W. 26th St. 212-337-9563.)

Short List

UGO RONDINONE
Marks, 523 W. 24th St.
212-243-0200. Through Oct. 30.

"SOME EXHAUST"
Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St.
212-255-2923. Through Sept. 25.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

BYRON DOBELL
A new group of drawings and paintings, mostly delicately observed landscapes of New York, Maine, and Europe. Through Oct. 2. (Atlantic, 40 Wooster St. 212-219-3183.)

ROBERT RYMAN
The richness of Ryman's white paintings is apparent in these works on paper from 1957 to 1964, the period during which he weaned himself from the saxophone and devoted himself to painting. The all-white-all-the-time label is a misperception, since Ryman often starts by laying down bold grounds of blue and green before covering them with thick, pasty layers of white. Color bleeds around the edges or emerges in sharp bursts. Other squares of paper—the rectangle suggested a landscape to him and hence was banished—sport carefully laid-out grids and bits of freehand drawing, or what seem, unmistakably, like studies for his own rounded, block-lettered signature, his logo. Through Sept. 25. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

"BREATH"
The Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshiary and her husband and collaborator, Pip Horne, have installed a white tower on the public plaza of the Battery Park Ritz-Carlton. Recordings of Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic, and Christian prayers emerge from the gaps between the overlapping ceramic bricks. Through Jan. 15. (2 West St. For more information, call Creative Time, at 212-206-6674.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHELLE ELZAY
Fifty-one color portraits of Benedictine nuns from the Abbaye Saint Marie de Maumont, in Bordeaux, are tucked into a glassed-in gallery off a busy corridor at Fordham's campus at Lincoln Center. The fourteen-by-fourteen-inch prints are closely hung in two rows, which emphasizes the monotony of the nuns' identical gray head scarves, white collars, and black dresses. But Sister Marie-Madeleine wears a huge smile, Sister Marie-Pierre seems awfully suspicious, and the ancient, smiling Sister Scholastique has a supermodel's cheekbones. Elzay's straightforward technique recalls August Sander and the Bechers. Through Sept. 30. (Center Gallery, Fordham University at Lincoln Center, 113 W. 60th St. 212-636-6303.)

"PHOTOGRAPHS BY IRAQI CIVILIANS"
A few months ago, an American arts foundation gave ten Iraqi citizens disposable cameras and asked them to photograph whatever they liked. The resulting images, now on display at N.Y.U., include pictures of gravediggers carrying their shovels to a burial site in Falluja, a young Iraqi boy with a spinal deformity being tended to by his mother, and a group of men talking and smoking in a barbershop in Baghdad. Most of the pictures have a single, often heart-wrenching subject and are simply composed. In the case of an image of a Japanese

advertisement

FALL FESTIVALS

The New Yorker Promotion Department encourages you to find out more about these cultural festivals in New York City this fall.

BAM NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

This ten-week festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music features more than 60 different performances, screenings, and related events showcasing the foremost creators of contemporary theatre, music, dance, film, literature, and new media by artists from around the world.

(718) 636-4100
www.bam.org

NEW YORK IS BOOK COUNTRY BOOK FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 2-3

This book festival celebrates New Yorkers' love of books with author panels, games, and activities, as well as book exhibitions and signings. This year the Festival moves from Fifth Avenue to Washington Square Park.

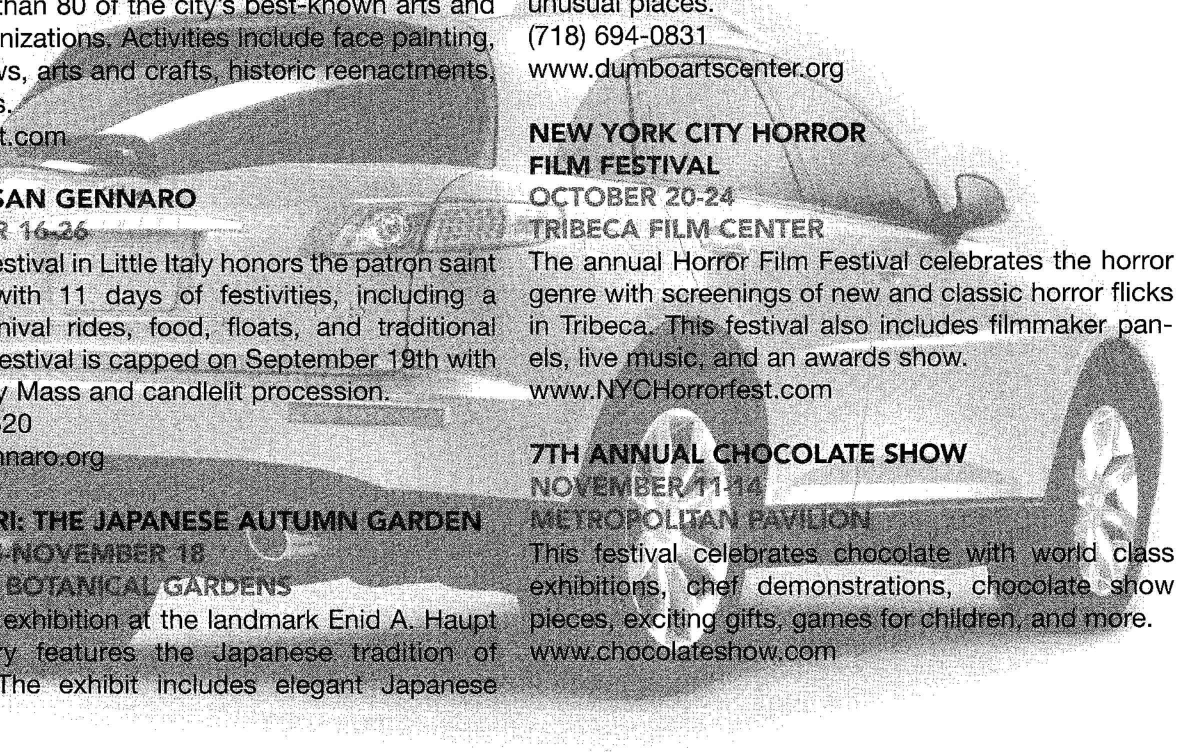
www.nyisbookcountry.com

CULTUREFEST

OCTOBER 2-3
BATTERY PARK

A family-friendly celebration of New York City's diverse cultural offerings, which includes performances by more than 80 of the city's best-known arts and cultural organizations. Activities include face painting, puppet shows, arts and crafts, historic reenactments, and readings.

www.nycvisit.com



FEAST OF SAN GENNARO

SEPTEMBER 16-26

This street festival in Little Italy honors the patron saint of Naples with 11 days of festivities, including a parade, carnival rides, food, floats, and traditional music. The festival is capped on September 19th with a celebratory Mass and candlelit procession.

(212) 768-9320
www.sangennaro.org

MOMIJIGARI: THE JAPANESE AUTUMN GARDEN

OCTOBER 5-NOVEMBER 18
NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDENS

This special exhibition at the landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory features the Japanese tradition of *Momijigari*. The exhibit includes elegant Japanese maples and conifers, artfully crafted bonsai, and stunning chrysanthemums.

(718) 817-8700
www.nybg.org

TIBETAN FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 10
JACQUES MARCHAIS MUSEUM OF TIBETAN ART
STATEN ISLAND

Featuring Tibetan food, crafts, a puppet show, and chanting monks, this festival offers lots of fun as well as opportunities to purchase indigenous, handcrafted, secular, and sacred objects.

(718) 987-3500
www.tibetanmuseum.org

D.U.M.B.O. ART UNDER THE BRIDGE FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 15-17

One of the country's largest contemporary visual arts festivals, this annual event features the work of more than 1,500 artists. From art and sound installations to nighttime projections, performances and exhibitions abound. On the walls, streets, and the East River, in parks, lobbies and galleries, expect to find art in unusual places.

(718) 694-0831
www.dumboartscenter.org

NEW YORK CITY HORROR FILM FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 20-24
TRIBECA FILM CENTER

The annual Horror Film Festival celebrates the horror genre with screenings of new and classic horror flicks in Tribeca. This festival also includes filmmaker panels, live music, and an awards show.

www.NYCHorrorfest.com

7TH ANNUAL CHOCOLATE SHOW

NOVEMBER 11-14
METROPOLITAN PAVILION

This festival celebrates chocolate with world class exhibitions, chef demonstrations, chocolate show pieces, exciting gifts, games for children, and more.

www.chocolateshow.com

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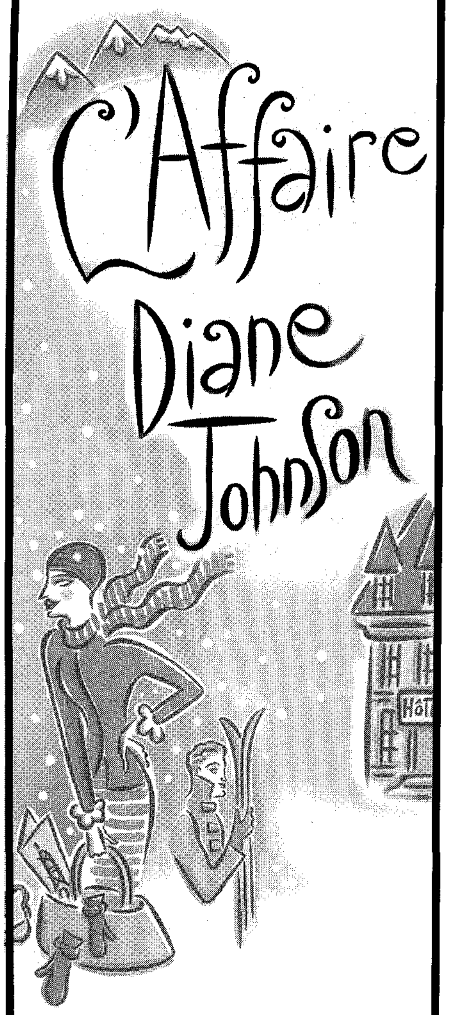
bestselling novel from the
author of *Le Divorce*



"A tour de force... [Johnson] whips up an international confection in which each flavor remains distinct, the comedy high, the suspense sharp."
—*Los Angeles Times*

"Delectable...a novel that feels completely effortless and charming."
—*The New York Times*

"Full of tip-top invention [and] a lightness of touch...a pleasure."
—*The Atlantic Monthly*

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photographer posing an Iraqi man against the wall of a mosque in Baghdad—the sheikh who negotiated the release of three Japanese journalists taken hostage in Falluja, it turns out—the results are sublime. Through Oct. 10. (Tisch School of the Arts, 721 Broadway. 212-998-1930.)

"WOMEN OF MEXICO"
Black-and-white photographs by five female photographers who were inspired, in one way or another, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Lola Alvarez Bravo, with whom Mariana Yampolsky studied, was his wife; Flor Garduño and Graciela Iturbide were his assistants; and Marcela Taboada sits on the board of the Alvarez Bravo Photographic Center, in Oaxaca. Most of their subjects are indigenous Mexican women and girls. Iturbide's "Our Lady of the Iguanas," a famous image from 1979, in which a sturdy market woman poses with a crown of eight large lizards on her head, was made only after the photographer had spent days selling vegetables with her subject. Through Sept. 18. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

Short List

GILLIAN LAUB
Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 212-517-3766.
Through Oct. 9.

ELLEN PHELAN
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.
Through Oct. 29.

ALESSANDRA SANGUINETTI
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.
Through Oct. 28.

ALEX WEBB
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.
Through Oct. 30.

GARRY WINOGRAND
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.
Through Oct. 16.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Sept. 14-16 at 10 A.M. and 2: An auction of a huge lot from the Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash estate that includes knickknacks and mementos from the couple's home, Johnny's handwritten song lyrics, Mother Maybelle Carter's homemade dresses and gowns, and enough banjos, guitars, and Autoharps to fill a tour bus. ♦ Sept. 17-18 at 10 A.M.: A sale of wine. ♦ Sept. 20-27: New York's inaugural Hermitage Week—a series of concerts, lectures, and educational programs celebrating the holdings of the legendary Russian museum—begins with an exhibit of ten masterpieces. The items on display date from the imperial period and underscore the cosmopolitanism of the Russian court. From Prussia, there's Frederick the Great's opulent snuffbox, a gift to Tsar Nicholas I; a gold filigree decoration, possibly from the Chinese emperor himself, crowned with Shou-xing, the god of longevity, whose blessings the Romanovs would soon find wanting; and a rose-water vessel from the imperial Mughal treasury, sent to St. Petersburg via diplomatic pouch (that is, on the back of an elephant), from Nadir-Shah, who sacked Delhi in 1739. ♦ Sept. 21 at 6:30: The historian Robert K. Massie discusses new historical perspectives on Catherine the Great, who greatly expanded Peter the Great's art collection by aggressively acquiring works from all over Europe. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 15 at 10 A.M.: Postwar and contemporary art works that run the gamut from Abstract Expressionism to Pop art, including the shockingly morbid "Decomposition of Man," by Willem de Kooning, and Mel Ramos's "Saucey," with its lusciously eroticized Breck Girl-style subject. ♦ Sept. 21 at 10 A.M. and 2: Four Shang bronzes from the Doris Duke collection on the block in this auction of Chinese furniture, archaic bronzes, and art works were included in the authoritative 1966 catalogue of Shang and Zhou bronzes by Chen Mengjia. The wide-ranging sale—the house's kickoff to Asia Week—also includes beds from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, jades, and ceramics. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
Sept. 15 at 10 A.M.: "Doyle at Home," a moderately priced auction of furniture, paintings, and decorations. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

À LA VIELLE RUSSIE
The venerable purveyor of Russiana, which opened its doors not long after the Hermitage Museum itself, joins the Hermitage Week festivities with an exhibition of great Russian works of art from American collections. The items range from a rare enamelled gold reliquary crucifix from the late seventeenth century to a repoussé gold snuffbox establishing Empress Elizabeth's legitimacy as an imperial heir. (781 Fifth Ave., at 59th St. 212-752-1727. Sept. 20-27.)

NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES & DESIGN SHOW
The Wendy firm—the big kahuna of New York antique shows—presents its first event of the season, an exhibition featuring eighty-two international dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-472-1180. Sept. 17-21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
In a time of financial uncertainty, and with a recent history of empty seats, the Met opens a conservative season with two star-studded productions. Sept. 20 at 7: Ben Heppner sings the title role of **"Otello"** at the opening-night gala. (He's sung it in Chicago before, but not here.) Barbara Frittoli is his Desdemona, with Carlo Guelfi singing Iago; James Levine, now doing double duty as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's music director, conducts. ♦ Sept. 21 at 8: Levine comes back to lead the first night of **"Carmen,"** with the magnificent Olga Borodina in the leading role, Neil Shicoff singing Don José, Hei-Kyung Hong as Micaëla, and Ildar Abdrazakov as Escamillo. Go for the singing, not for Franco Zeffirelli's enervated production. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Sept. 16 at 7:30 and Sept. 18 at 1:30: **"La Traviata,"** with Maria Kanyova, Robert Breault, and Michael Corvino in the leading roles; George Manahan conducts. ♦ Sept. 17 at 8 and Sept. 21 at 7:30: City Opera presents New York's first staged production of Strauss's **"Daphne,"** a rapturously beautiful "bucolic tragedy" that closes with the heroine's transformation into the sacred laurel tree from which heroes' crowns are made. With Elizabeth Futral (in the title role), Ursula Ferri, Roger Honeywell, and Robert Chafin; Manahan. ♦ Sept. 18 at 8: James Robinson's production of **"La Bohème,"** set during the First World War, is a reliable platform for the company's crew of young singing actors. It returns with a cast led by Angela Marambio, Julianne Borg, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Grant Youngblood; Steven White. ♦ Sept. 19 at 1:30: **"La Rondine,"** Puccini's sole operetta, pours the hooker-with-a-heart-of-gold scenario at the core of "La Traviata" through the comedic sieve of "Der Rosenkavalier"; no one dies this time around, but the tears still flow. (The supple tunes include the beloved "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta.") With Pamela Armstrong, Angela Turner Wilson, Gerard Powers, and Tracey Welborn, in Lotfi Mansouri's Second Empire production; Stephen Lord. (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA
Sally and Anthony Amato's little operatic miracle on the Lower East Side opens its fifty-seventh season with **"The Magic Flute."** (319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Sept. 18 at 7:30 and Sept. 19 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel begins his third season as the orchestra's music director with a gala concert cele-

brating the ninetieth birthday of Carlos Moseley, the Philharmonic's chairman emeritus, a program of Dvořák (the "New World" Symphony) and Beethoven (the Violin Concerto, with the magnetic Maxim Vengerov as soloist). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Sept. 21 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE:

LEONARD BERNSTEIN COMPOSER PORTRAIT

Many of New York's most enterprising young musicians received crucial mentoring from Leonard Bernstein. George Steel, Miller Theatre's intendant, is one of them, and in the first of the season's Composer Portraits he leads his pickup Gotham City Orchestra in a homage to his mentor. An impressive assemblage of young and seasoned soloists—the violinist Jennifer Koh, the clarinettist Derek Bermel, and the sopranos Amy Burton and Nancy Allen Lundy—offer a program that includes such works as the "Serenade" and "Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs" and several excerpts from the opera "A Quiet Place" (which has never been heard in New York before). Sparks should fly. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Sept. 18 at 7.)

POLYHYMNIA

The chamber choir, in residence at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch, sings music by three major Flemish composers of the Renaissance—Gombert, Crecquillon, and Clemens non Papa. (West End Ave. at 87th St. 917-838-4636. Sept. 18 at 8.)

AMUSE

The sixteen-strong women's choral ensemble (with the organist Nicholas White) offers a secular Evensong—an afternoon of music composed for treble voices by Praetorius, Victoria, Kodály, Poulenc ("Litanies à la Vierge Noire"), Britten (the gracefully acidulous Missa Brevis in D Major), and others. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Sept. 19 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC

The barge breaks out of its box—or tries to—with a full-scale chamber-orchestra concert in which thirty musicians will cram their way onto the stage (with a timpanist at the door). No conductor per se is listed, but you can bet that the violinist Mark Peskanov, Bargemusic's artistic director, will make his presence felt. The program includes music by Mozart, Dvořák (the Serenade for Winds, Op. 44), and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (the Violin Concerto). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Sept. 16-18 at 7:30 and Sept. 19 at 4.)

MY LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S CONSORT

The viol group Parthenia (and two guest artists, the soprano Katie Geissinger and the bass Michael Reder) joins the consort for "Songes of Sundrie Kindes," a rare complete performance of the First (and only) Book of Songs by Thomas Greaves, a contemporary of Dowland's. (Church of St. Luke-In-the-Fields, Hudson St. at Grove St. Sept. 18 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

NEW JUILLIARD ENSEMBLE

Joel Sachs's intrepid student group offers a program of premières by an international slate of composers (including Iceland's Haukur Tómasson and Israel's Menachem Zur). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 18 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

"KOL NIDRE THROUGH THE AGES"

Three hundred and fifty years ago, America's first Jewish community was established in New York, and the 92nd Street Y is celebrating with a series of concerts. The baritone Sanford Sylvan is the artistic director for this exploration of the holiest prayer in the Jewish liturgy. It will include performances of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic settings of the prayer—along with other music for the High Holidays from Persia to Portugal—given by the cantor and choir of Congregation Shearith Israel, the cantor Marc Hazan, the Flux Quartet, and others, in addition to spoken commentary (by such authorities as the Rabbi Norman Janis, a Hillel chaplin at Harvard). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Sept. 19 at 3.)

ROULETTE

Two distinctive drummers—the experimentalist Andrew Cyrille and the more jazz-based Victor Lewis—join forces to explore the possibilities of the trap set, a highlight of the downtown performance collective's fall series. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-219-8242. Sept. 19 at 8:30. For a full schedule of concerts, see www.roulette.org.)

ANTARA ENSEMBLE

Harold Jones, the flutist and founder of this predominantly African-American group, joins his colleagues for an evening of Bach, including the Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor and the Brandenburg Concerto No. 4. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Sept. 21 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

OUT OF TOWN

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC SERIES

Ariel Winds, the young all-female wind quintet (a recent winner of the Artists International Auditions), provides the closing concert of the season, an evening of music by Hindemith, Tchaikovsky, Ravel (an arrangement of "Tombeau de Couperin") and Amy Beach ("Pastorale"). (Saugatuck Congregational Church, 245 Post Rd. E., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. Sept. 17 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

Sept. 16 at 7: A night with authors from Punk Planet Books, Akashic Books, and Soft Skull Press features Joe Meno, reading from his novel "Hairstyles of the Damned," the novelist Derek McCormack, offering selections from "The Haunted Hillbilly," and the poet and writer Daniel Nester, who will read from his book "God Save My Queen II: The Show Must Go On." (Brooklyn Brewery, 79 N. 11th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 19 at 7: Sarah Shun-Lien Bynum reads from her novel, "Madeleine Is Sleeping," and the French writer Antoine Audouard reads from the first novel of his translated into English, "Farewell, My Only One." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 20 at 8: Norman Mailer opens the fall season of readings at the 92nd Street Y. He'll present selections from his work and discuss his book "Modest Gifts: Poems and Drawings." (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

TALKS

Sept. 16 at 6: Vernon Reid, DJ Rekha, and other musicians in a discussion titled "The Changing Culture of New Music." (Memorial Hall, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. 718-636-3657.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 1: The architects Daniel Libeskind, Santiago Calatrava, and Michael Arad talk about their plans for Ground Zero. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-358-6126.) ♦ Sept. 20 at 7: Beth Genné, a professor of dance history and art history at the University of Michigan, discusses Balanchine's work in Hollywood in the nineteen-thirties. Excerpts from "The Goldwyn Follies," "On Your Toes," and other musicals will be screened. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St. 212-496-3809.) ♦ Sept. 21 at 5:30: To mark the republication of Jessica Mitford's autobiography "Hons and Rebels," the journalist Christopher Hitchens, who wrote an introduction for the new volume, talks with the poet Maya Angelou, a close friend of the late writer and activist. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-930-0855.) ♦ Sept. 21 at 7: Bel Kaufman, whose popular 1965 novel, "Up the Down Staircase," detailed life in a city public school, joins Randi Weingarten, the president of the United Federation of Teachers, for a discussion about how times have, and haven't, changed for schoolteachers. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-817-8215.)

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MOVIES OPENING

GHOST IN THE SHELL 2: INNOCENCE
This anime sequel from the writer-director Mamoru Oshii is a detective story set in the year 2032, a time when humans and robots have become virtually indistinguishable. In Japanese and Cantonese. Opening Sept. 17.

GOODBYE, DRAGON INN
Tsai Ming-liang's minimalist drama chronicles the final night of screenings at a dilapidated movie theatre in Taipei. In Mandarin and Taiwanese. Opening Sept. 17.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS
The story of the tumultuous affair between an Irishman (Stuart Townsend) and an artist (Charlize Theron) during the years of the Second World War. With Penélope Cruz. Written and directed by John Duigan. Opening Sept. 17.

INCIDENT AT LOCH NESS
Zak Penn directed this fake documentary, in which the combustible director Werner Herzog and a camera crew search for the legendary monster. Opening Sept. 17. (Sunshine Cinema.)

MR. 3000
A baseball player (Bernie Mac) comes out of retirement when he learns that he did not actually reach three thousand hits, in a comedy directed by Charles Stone III. With Angela Bassett and Tom Arnold. Opening Sept. 17.

PARTICLES OF TRUTH
A young artist (Jennifer Elster) prepares for her first major exhibition, in a drama about the interconnected lives of eight lonely New Yorkers. Elster also wrote and directed. Opening Sept. 17. (Village East Cinemas.)

SILVER CITY
In a political satire from the writer-director John Sayles, the born-again, verbally inept scion of a political family (Chris Cooper) runs for governor of Colorado. With Richard Dreyfuss, Maria Bello, Danny Huston, and others. Opening Sept. 17.

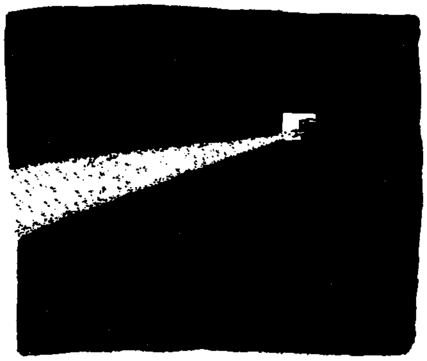
SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW
A stylized nineteen-thirties New York comes under attack by giant robots, in an adventure epic with live actors and all-digital backgrounds. The cast includes Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Angelina Jolie, and Giovanni Ribisi. Written and directed by Kerry Conran. Opening Sept. 17.

WIMBLEDON
Kirsten Dunst and Paul Bettany star in this romantic comedy set in the world of professional tennis. Directed by Richard Loncraine. Opening Sept. 17.

ZELARY
A Czech nurse (Ana Geislerová) escapes the Nazi invasion by fleeing to the countryside, where she changes her name and lives with a peasant farmer (György Cserhalmi). Directed by Ondrej Trojan. In Czech, German, and Russian. Opening Sept. 17. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY
Fast, faster, and fastest—that's the way the cutting rate goes in this sequel to "The Bourne Identity." The director, Paul Greengrass, jumps ahead within scenes, then jumps again. Greengrass is like a man breathing so fast that he never draws much oxygen into his lungs. Yet, of its kind, "The Bourne Supremacy" is incredibly skilled. Greengrass arranges pursuits and escapes that fly like arrows. He tears up staid old Moscow in a car chase and turns routine C.I.A. procedural stuff—people looking at computer screens and barking code names and other gibberish at each other—into nerve-racking contests of will. The movie is stripped down for action, and its hero—the survivor of a botched operation who suffers from amnesia—has no identity beyond his superlative physical skills and a vague sense of guilt. Harried, chased, both hunted and hunter, the blunt-nosed Matt Damon is a superhero reduced to pure reflex, yet, by means of his isolation and his stoicism, he becomes almost a romantic figure. Set in Goa, Naples, Berlin, Moscow, and, should you blink, perhaps Madagascar and Sardinia, too. With Joan Allen, Brian Cox, Julia Stiles, and Franka Potente. Adapted by Tony Gilroy from a Robert Ludlum novel.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/9 & 16/04.) (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)



BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS
Evelyn Waugh's early satirical novel "Vile Bodies" has a special brittleness that makes it unique in fiction. The young, upper-class London socialites—the Throbbings and Miles Malpractice and the rest—strike attitudes, rattle on without ever saying what they mean, fall in and out of ridiculous scrapes, and party, party, party. The trouble is, one cannot photograph Waugh's prose, which has the slender, hard clarity of a bitter lyric poem. Stephen Fry's adaptation of the book lays on a heavy dose of period production design and whirls about madly, and, here and there, the actors have funny or touching moments, especially Fenella Woolgar, who plays the daft Agatha Runcible ("too, too shaming"). But mostly the movie feels overwrought and insubstantial. One looks at a handsome young stage actor like Stephen Campbell Moore, who, as the hero, Adam Fenwick-Symes, has penetrating eyes, and one thinks, Why is this fine-looking young man behaving in such a feckless and stupid way? With Emily Mortimer, Michael Sheen, James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent, Dan Aykroyd as a bellowing Canadian press lord, and Stockard Channing as the American revivalist, Mrs. Melrose Ape.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and New York Twin.)

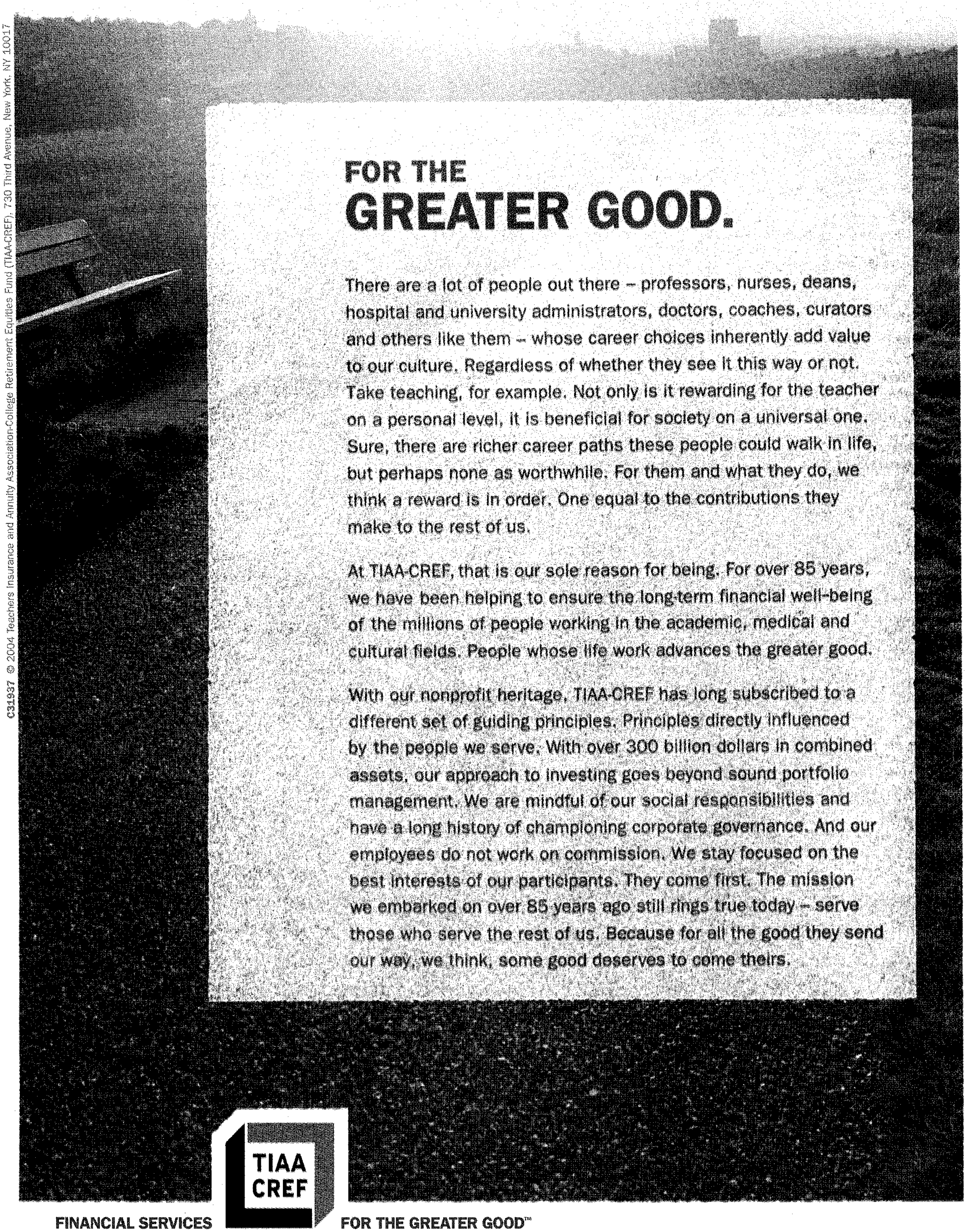
THE BROWN BUNNY
The downtown New York model-musician-painter Vincent Gallo has a talent for bristling self-promotion; last year, after Roger Ebert made a negative judgement on an early version of this film, Gallo issued a fatwa against Ebert's prostate. Gallo's movie may be borderline tedious, but it is an art work of sorts, and the director-star himself, though an egomaniac of staggering solemnity—a priest of art longing for a cult—is not a fake. He essentially made the movie alone, travelling in a van with a sparse crew and watching himself on a monitor during the takes. The story borrows motifs and moods derived from the American road movies of the late sixties and early seventies, as well as from Antonioni's distanced emotional funks. Gallo plays Bud, a motorcycle racer on a cross-country trek from New Hampshire to Los Angeles, where he plans to hook up with an old girlfriend, Daisy (Chloë Sevigny). When Bud reaches his destination, the now notorious scene of intimacy takes place, but it's too oddly framed to be pornographic. Placed at the end of the movie as it is, the encounter actually makes dramatic sense.—*D.D.* (9/13/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

COLLATERAL
Tom Cruise as an assassin in a silver-gray suit shows up in Los Angeles at dusk and expects to leave at dawn. His job: to eliminate five people involved in an impending federal prosecution of a drug cartel. He bullies a sweet-tempered taxi-driver, one Max Durocher (Jamie Foxx), into providing transportation all through the night, and "Collateral" turns into a kind of convoluted buddy movie, in which the two men engage in a weird, terse dialogue about murder. The plot of "Collateral," which was directed by Michael Mann, is just a movie-ish contrivance, and the violence is no more than thuggishly casual and chic—that is, very enjoyable. But shot by shot, scene by scene, Mann may be the best director in Hollywood. Methodical and precise, he analyzes a scene into minute components—a door closing, an arm thrust out—and gathers the fragments into seamless units; he wants you to live inside the physical event, not just experience the sensation of it. "Collateral" comes off like clockwork, but it's a clock that breathes—great actors like Mark Ruffalo, Javier Bardem, and Barry Shabaka Henley have sustained, intricate moments in the pauses between the violent acts. With Jada Pinkett Smith. Written by Stuart Beattie. Shot largely with digital cameras by Dion Beebe and Paul Cameron.—*D.D.* (8/9 & 16/04) (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GARDEN STATE
Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff), a struggling actor, arrives in his native New Jersey with some extra baggage: his paraplegic mother has possibly committed suicide, he's been on Zoloft since forever, and his one major acting credit is as a retarded quarterback. This would be a difficult burden for any young man, let alone a début movie. But Braff, who also wrote and directed, keeps the tone light with some funny homecoming scenes. There's a party where Large is greeted as "Jersey's De Niro," a run-in with a high-school friend turned cop, and, like a winning bass line, the smirking wit of his slacker friend Mark (Peter Sarsgaard). The movie is also lifted by the presence of Natalie Portman, perhaps the ultimate ethereal home-town girl. Braff eventually takes the movie to emotional places where only the extremely tenderhearted will follow, but there are a lot of resonant moments and a moody, introspective soundtrack.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HERO
The Chinese director Zhang Yimou, having previously worked on a restrained scale, decides to go symphonic. Hence the broad thrusts of this movie, which is set two thousand years ago and is designed to show that, at a time when other modern civilizations were still mud-bound, China was putting the final touches on the process of governing by martial arts. The pitiless leader of the Qin kingdom welcomes a young official (Jet Li), who has allegedly killed off three notable assassins, thus insuring peace in the land. His story does not ring true, and we are duly led through a variety of competing versions, each of them shot in different colors, under different skies. The result is not so much a historical epic as a kind of highly determined ballet: dreamy with bloodless violence, relying less on shades of character than on magnificence of gesture, and closer to the Michael Powell of "The Red Shoes" or "Tales of Hoffmann," say, than to the strivings of David Lean. With the unflappable Maggie Cheung. Cinematography by Christopher Doyle. In Mandarin.—*Anthony Lane* (9/6/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
The famous original, from 1962, written by George Axelrod, from a Richard Condon novel, and directed by John Frankenheimer, was a satire of Cold War anxieties that cut both ways, attacking both the far right and the far left. Acidulous and brazenly absurd, the movie was a one-of-a-kind mainstream picture, with startling oddities that people talked about for years. This updated version, written by Daniel Pyne and Dean Georgias and directed by Jonathan Demme, is doggedly, wretchedly earnest. A shadowy big company reminiscent of Halliburton or the Carlyle Group attempts to take over the



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White House by placing a computer chip in the brain of a war hero turned congressman (Liev Shreiber) who is under the control of his reactionary mother (Meryl Streep), a senator unaccountably made up to look like Hillary Clinton. What was satire of paranoia in the old movie has been turned into just plain paranoia. The bad memories of the hero (Denzel Washington), who suspects that the war hero is a fake, are accompanied by the conventional horror-film frights of painted faces, spooky doctors, and smoky, distorted cinematography. The movie is overwrought and unfocussed, and there isn't a joke in it anywhere.—*D.D.* (8/9 & 16/04) (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Opening September 17, John Sayles's "Silver City."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

MARIA FULL OF GRACE

In this superbly poised independent film, Maria (Catalina Sandino Moreno), a willful seventeen-year-old, unhappily pregnant and stuck in a factory job, agrees to serve as a "mule," carrying in her stomach little pellets of heroin from her native Colombia to New Jersey. Joshua Marston, a thirty-five-year-old N.Y.U. film-school graduate, nosed around Colombia and New York's immigrant neighborhoods before beginning to shoot "Maria," his first full-length feature, and the way he dramatized the material seems instinctively right: he goes step by step, detail by detail, emotion by emotion, eliding nothing, exaggerating nothing. In his calm and lucid way, Marston has made one of the emblematic coming-to-America stories of our time.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Sunshine Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

MEAN CREEK

An outstanding performance by Josh Peck as a young schoolyard bully who's invited out to a party on a river, where a group of kids plan his comeuppance, anchors this suspenseful and elegiac film. The writer and director, Jacob Aaron Estes, gives his terrific cast (which includes Rory Culkin and Scott Mechlowicz) the kind of youthful, textured dialogue that feels naturally captured. The ebb and flow of the scenes generates a nervous power and a haunting sense of the inevitable.—*Bruce Diones* (Sunshine Cinema.)

OPEN WATER

Chris Kentis's expertly made thriller is about a yuppie couple stranded in the Caribbean after they are mistakenly abandoned on a scuba-diving excursion. The handheld-camera work (by Laura Lau) and no-budget ocean settings combine for an unflinchingly realistic ordeal. Kentis drifts his two more-than-game actors (Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis) farther and farther out to sea, into shark-infested waters, and the anything-can-happen moments are unrelenting. There's a sublime indifference to suffering in this film that a viewer will find terrifying, stomach-churning, and, maybe, refreshing.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

A PERFECT CANDIDATE

R. J. Cutler and David Van Taylor's 1996 documentary about the 1994 Virginia senatorial race between the Democratic incumbent Charles S. Robb and the Republican maverick and Iran-contra antihero Oliver North proves to be part horrifying exposé, part blistering black comedy. North's campaign manager, Mark Goodin, emerges as the movie's font of corrupt wisdom. He uses North's reactionary and hypocritical yet also wholesome and heartfelt populism to exploit Robb's scandal-tainted image as a sleazy Washington pol. (Goodin comes to regret that he didn't push North to be more unrelentingly negative—and, indeed, Robb rebounds only when he goes deeply negative on North.) The movie's voice of reason is the Washington *Post* reporter Don Baker, who despairs when he can't get a straight answer from Robb on a Democratic issue as clear cut as the right of workers to strike without losing their jobs. The movie couldn't be more relevant.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Sept. 19.)

TABU: A STORY OF THE SOUTH SEAS

Working together, two great directors—Robert Flaherty and the German Expressionist F. W. Murnau—began this South Seas picture; they disagreed and Flaherty split. Murnau was killed in an auto accident before the 1931 opening of this marvellous, deeply flawed classic. It has some of the worst scenes that have ever been part of a work of screen art—cavorting natives and a creaking plot and a heroine with plucked eyebrows—and its musical score combines plaintive, moaning choirs, bits of Schubert, and "The Moldau," but the dancing is superlative and there are extraordinary pictorial effects. Murnau's mysticism may be alien to the islands, but it does wonders for the movie: the old chieftain of the village becomes as chilly a figure of doom as the emaciated vampire of Murnau's "Nosferatu," and at the end, the ghostly little boat does not seem to be sailing like an ordinary boat. . . . It is headed for nothing so commonplace as land.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Sept. 19-20.)

THX 1138

George Lucas's first feature (from 1971) imagines a future where corporate capitalism and consumerism have culminated in a totalitarian government and an emotional and cultural whiteout. The deep-eyed Robert Duvall plays the title character, a drug-tuned worker; the touching Maggie McOmie plays his roommate, LUH 3417, who tricks him off his meds and into the criminal act of making love to her. The results: a short trial and a long stay in a pale prison. There, chrome black-leather-suited robot cops poke at THX with cattle prods before he makes a cathartic attempt to break through the whole dystopia's hermetically sealed environment with the help of a renegade hologram (Don Pedro Colley). If Lucas's later films boast cornucopias of visual invention, his début uses an audacious minimalism for hypnotic effect, most famously in the prison scenes: the pink flesh of the white-clad inmates registers with a vivid fragility against the white décor. The movie veers between inspiration and anhedonia, but McOmie and Duvall imbue their two big scenes with an erotic melancholy never felt again in Lucas's work, and the script (by Lucas and Walter Murch, who also did the brain-pinging sound montage) contains sharp shards of political and industrial triple-talk. The most creative aspect of the "director's cut" is the digital enhancement of both audio and image: Lucas subtly enlarges the cityscapes and soundscapes to bring home the against-all-odds pathos and heroism of THX and his LUH.—*M.S.* (Empire 25.)

VANITY FAIR

In the hands of the Indian-born director Mira Nair, Thackeray's story of social climbing and tumbling emerges as strong meat, sauced to the point of surfeit by the heat of human greed. Becky Sharp (Reese Witherspoon) hasn't got a penny to her name, or a saving speck of conscience, but she has everything else, and, thus equipped, she begins her climb: a spell in the bosom of the Sedley family, courtesy of her friend Amelia (Romola Garai); a grim sojourn in the moldering mansion of the Crawleys; marriage to the dashing Rawdon (James Purefoy), the romance of which soon falters for lack of funds; and, by way of a Faustian finale, the demonic embrace of Lord Steyne (Gabriel Byrne), for whom money has bought a living death. Nair packs the frame with detail, and she never misses a chance to remind us just how much of the wealth of the early nineteenth century was garnered abroad, at the cost of colonial blood and sweat; but this argument comes to flood the drama, until the tale of Becky herself is in danger of being swamped. The novel thrums with incident, like a reporter's notebook, but onscreen that sort of frenzy is too much; viewers like to know what, or whom, to root for, and without that knowledge they feel lost. With an apparently endless list of British actors, including Jim Broadbent, Bob Hoskins, Eileen Atkins, Geraldine McEwan, and (struggling with the slippery role of George Osborne) Jonathan Rhys Meyers.—*A.L.* (9/6/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

In this extraordinary adaptation of two Andre Dubus novellas from the nineteen-seventies, Laura Dern is a woman married to a mediocre college English teacher (Mark Ruffalo) in New England. When her husband begins an affair with her best friend (Naomi Watts), she takes revenge, with her husband's guilty help, by sleeping with her best friend's husband (Peter Krause). The movie is so beautifully made, and so strong emotionally, that the potentially dreary material is actually thrilling. The director, John Curran, lets the squalling marital fights between Ruffalo and Dern swell and crest without unnecessary emphasis. The entire production is precise, vibrant, and, for all its turmoil, extremely moving. Michael Convertino did the music, and Maryse Alberti did the lovely cinematography, which builds a canopy of nature over the characters, season by season, and lets us know that, unhappy or not, they will survive. The screenplay is by Larry Gross.—*D.D.* (8/30/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

WICKER PARK

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cine-

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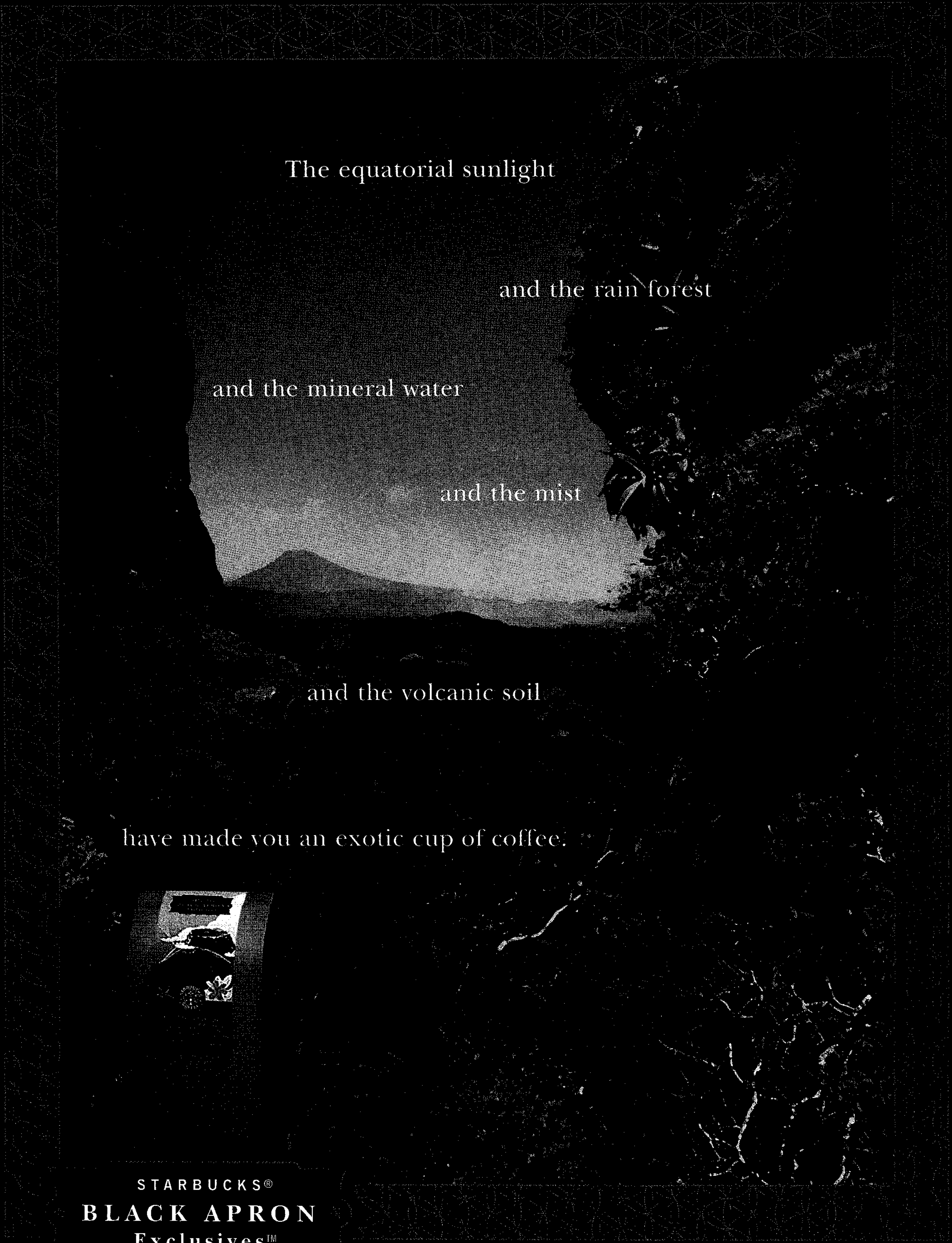
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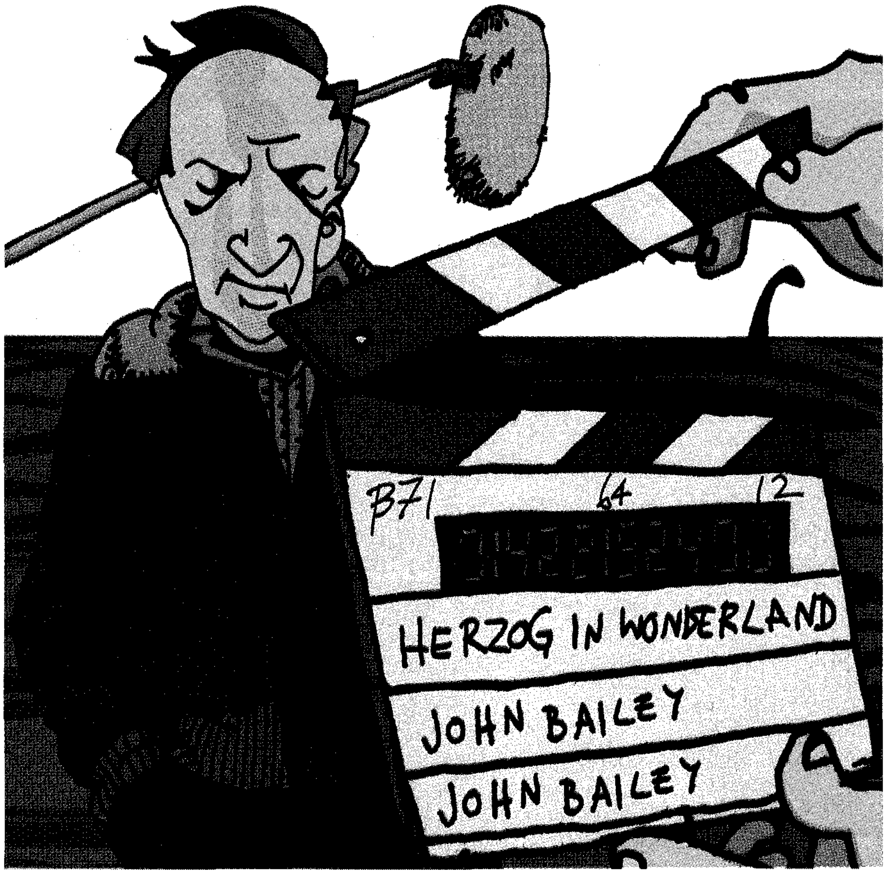
mas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BUSH'S BRAIN
Cinema Village.
CRIMINAL
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.
END OF THE CENTURY: THE STORY OF THE RAMONES
Angelika Film Center.
A LETTER TO TRUE
Film Forum.
RED LIGHTS
Angelika Film Center, Cinema 2, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
REMEMBER ME, MY LOVE
Paris and Sunshine Cinema.
WHEN WILL I BE LOVED?
Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.



Werner Herzog in "Incident at Loch Ness," opening September 17.

JASHAR AWAN

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 26: A series of films about American politics. Sept. 15 at 7: "Silver City" (2004, John Sayles). ♦ Sept. 18 at 2: "State of the Union" (1948, Frank Capra). ♦ Sept. 18 at 4:30: "The War Room" (1993, D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus). ♦ Sept. 19 at 2: "A Perfect Candidate" (†). ♦ Sept. 19 at 4: "Bulworth" (1998, Warren Beatty). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 17 at 7:30 and Sept. 18-19 at 6:30: "Amarcord" (1974, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Through Sept. 18: The New York Brazilian Film Festival. All films are in Portuguese. Sept. 15 at 7: "The Frontier" (2002, Roberto Carminati). ♦ Sept. 16 at 7: "The Dog's Will" (2000, Guel Arraes). ♦ Sept. 17 at 7: "Cazuza" (2004, Sandra Werneck and Walter Carvalho). ♦ Special event: The film archivist Skip Elsheimer shows highlights from his collection of 16-mm. educational films. Sept. 16 at 7 and 9. ♦ Through Sept. 26: A retrospective of the director and cinematographer Babette Mangolte. Sept. 17-19 at 7: "Pickpocket" (1959, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Sept. 17-19 at 9 and Sept. 20-21 at 7: "The Models of Pickpocket" (2003). ♦ Sept. 19 at 5: "Visible Cities" (1991). ♦ Sept. 20 at 9: "The Camera: Je" (1977). ♦ Sept. 21 at 9: "The Cold Eye" (1980). ♦ Special screenings. Sept. 18 at 8:30: "Asylum" (1972, Peter Robinson). ♦ Sept. 20 at 8: "Panorama Ephemera" (2004, Rick Prelinger).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinema Tropical." Sept. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Private Archives of Pablo Escobar" (2002, Marc de Beaufort). ♦ Films with innovative soundtracks. Sept. 16 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Downtown 81" (1981, Edo Bertoglio). ♦ Sept. 17-19: The Brooklyn Digital Film Festival. ♦ Through Oct. 5: John Boorman films. Sept. 20 at 7:30: "Hope and Glory" (1987). ♦ Sept. 21 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Catch Us If You Can" (1965).

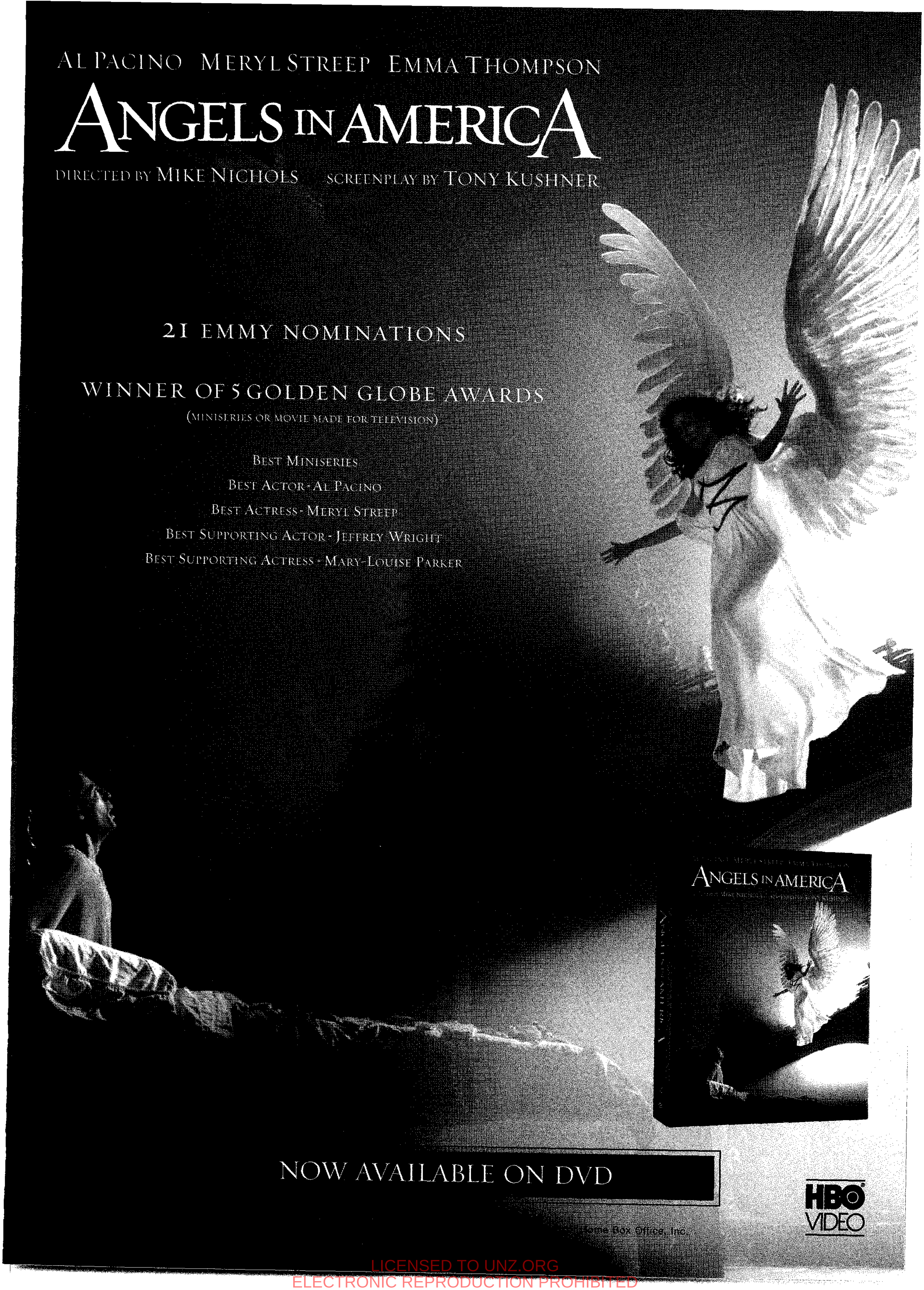
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Sept. 20: A retrospective of F. W. Murnau films. Sept. 15 at 7 and 10:20: "Murnau's Four Devils: Traces of a Lost Film" (2003, Janet Bergstrom). ♦ Sept. 15 at 8: "Phantom" (1922). ♦ Sept. 16 at 1:20, 3:10, 5:15, 7:15, and 9:10: "Sunrise" (1927). ♦ Sept. 17-18 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "The Last Laugh" (1924). ♦ Sept. 17-18 at 2:45, 6:10, and 9:35: "Nosferatu" (1922). ♦ Sept. 19 at 1, 4:30, and 8 and Sept. 20 at 1 and 4:30: "Tabu: A Story of the South Seas" (†). ♦ Sept. 19 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40 and Sept. 20 at 2:40: "City Girl" (1930). ♦ Sept. 20 at 7: "Faust" (1926). ♦ Sept. 20 at 9:10: "Tartuffe" (1925). ♦ A 3-D film screening. Sept. 21 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Gorilla at Large" (1954, Harmon Jones).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Nov. 16: "Sisters: Dorléac and Deneuve." Sept. 21 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Young Girls Turn Twenty-Five" (1993, Agnès Varda; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Sept. 17-18: "The Godfather, Part II" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Sept. 15 at 8: "The Turandot Project" (2000, Allan Miller).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Sept. 16: "Cairo Tales: Discovering Salah Abou Seif and Recent Cinema from the Arab World." All films are in Arabic. Sept. 15 at 2 and 6:15: "The Trial 68" (1968, Salah Abou Seif). ♦ Sept. 15 at 4:15 and 8:30: "The Water Bearer Is Dead" (1977, Seif). ♦ Sept. 16 at 1 and 9:30: "Terra Incognita" (2002, Ghassan Salhab). ♦ Sept. 16 at 3:15: "Sacrifices" (2003, Oussama Mohammad). ♦ Sept. 16 at 5:30: "The Murdered Sun" (2003, Abdelkrim Bahloul). ♦ Sept. 16 at 7:15: "Edward Said: The Last Interview" (2004, Mike Dibb; in English). ♦ Through Sept. 29: "Latinbeat 2004: Recent Films from Latin America." All films are in Spanish. Sept. 17 at 1 and Sept. 18 at 3: "Ashes of Paradise" (1997, Marcelo Piñeyro). ♦ Sept. 17 at 4, Sept. 18 at 9, and Sept. 19 at 1:30: "Machuca" (2004, Andrés Wood). ♦ Sept. 17 at 9:30 and Sept. 20 at 4:50: "Love Hurts" (2002, Fernando Sariñana). ♦ Sept. 18 and Sept. 20 at 1 and Sept. 21 at 4: "So Far Away" (2003, Juan Carlos Tabío). ♦ Sept. 18 at 6 and Sept. 19 at 6:30: "Kamchatka" (2002, Piñeyro). ♦ Sept. 19 at 4:15 and Sept. 20 at 9:30: "Offsides" (2003, Victor Manuel Arregui). ♦ Sept. 19 at 9 and Sept. 20 at 3: "Tango, a Strange Turn" (2004, Mercedes García Guevara). ♦ Sept. 21 at 1: "What the Eye Doesn't See" (2003, Francisco J. Lombardi).



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relays Solenoids Heavy-duty miniature applicators Absorbents and dessicants Voice networks Sea plows for undersea excavation Insulators Medical electrode gels Welded steel tubing Micropatch antennas Filters Thermocouple cables Avionics Polyethylene stretch films Backplane connector systems **Aircraft wire and power cables** Lamps Conformal antennas Serving trays Battery chargers Drills Panel boards Audio receivers Wire basket cable trays Pressure vessel clamps Snow melting mats Matrix switchers Amplitude measurement equipment Salve Telephony analysis Automatic door controls Well cleaners and developers Automotive micro power relays Plastic protective sheeting Patch cable Automotive mini power relays Transmission line accessories Hazard detection products Building wraps Vending machine components Scales Intuitive LCD and CRT touchmonitors USB connectors Cable clamps Micropneumatic systems Cable ducting systems Sealants and gels Electrical metallic tubing set-screw connectors and couplings Insulation facers Call center monitoring services Relays with forcibly-guided contacts Spa controls Industrial control hybrids Gas masks Laser rangefinders Sodium bicarbonate based extinguishing agents Flame-retardant drapery systems Resuscitators for infants and children Digital watch parts Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Chartering cable ships Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotive module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Heat isolation devices Explosion-proof detectors Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Modem cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Databus assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio detection Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and blind-mate power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Raised face flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medication nebulizers Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Rooftop walkways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound mixers Air traffic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resistor protection Thermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscopy Cable assemblies Irrigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners Voltage-variable attenuators Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Stormwater and wastewater st[illegible]d readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Di[illegible] resuscitators Systems for offshore oil and gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Lo[illegible] cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical needles Cryogenic valves Wiring harness design software Automotive comm[illegible]ted design services Porcelain disc insulators Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic procedure trays Inkjet fluids Diagnostic s[illegible]ess testing Landscape plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Automatic blood pressure infusors Coated and cloth-backed building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment Flange gaskets with bulb elastometers Exotic alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden equipment Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler heads Hand pumps Climate control monitoring Satellite radio [illegible] audio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pumps Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylate [illegible] adhesives Large-screen video projectors Eye pads Arterial extension sets Paper mill wraps Fence framework Distribution panels [illegible] timers Protective breathing equipment Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power toggle switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dioxide gas transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefighting flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination machines Dual hybrids Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion lamination Parking deck PVC-jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management Instrument winterization Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pair high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adapters Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Thermal controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin coax probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel management systems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice amplifiers Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threadable sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable assemblies Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices Vibration dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fiber-optic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and couplings Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter door and window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylinder assemblies Alarm communication systems Identification products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

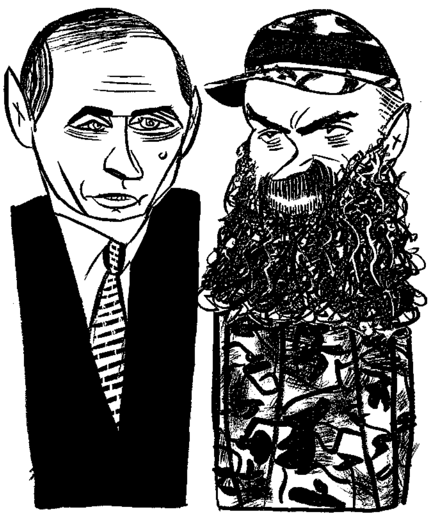
COMMENT
PRISONERS OF THE CAUCASUS

In Russia, the tragic sense is not limited to Chekhovian intellectuals or tyranny's victims. Even the privileged few, insulated by high office and a pride of bodyguards, know the truth when they care to look out a Kremlin window. In the post-Soviet period, Russian fatalism was captured best by a former prime minister and natural-gas magnate, Viktor Chernomyrdin, when he remarked, after yet another disaster of state, "We wanted it to go better, but it turned out as always."

The hope that the collapse of Communism would lead to the evolution of a liberal, democratic order in the East remains a working proposition in Poland, the Czech Republic, and elsewhere in the region. But in Russia it has, in many respects, turned out as always. Some of the crises were predictable from the outset of the post-Communist era. It will take many years for the national economy to recover from seven decades of Communism, not to mention centuries of feudal autocracy; it may take another generation for the national psyche to heal. But only those with the most well-honed tragic sense could have imagined that in 2004 Russia would be ruled by a President whose language and instincts were shaped by his career as an officer of the K.G.B., and that the country's most urgent threat would come from ruthless Chechen terrorists who increasingly modelled their tactics and ideology on the jihadists of the Middle East and South Asia.

The slaughter in the town of Beslan earlier this month of hundreds of schoolchildren and their parents was a crime for which there is no defense. The act of shooting children in the back as they try to flee is no more comprehensible than the act of steering commercial airliners into office buildings. As many Russians acknowledge, however, there is a past, an original sin, behind the new crisis.

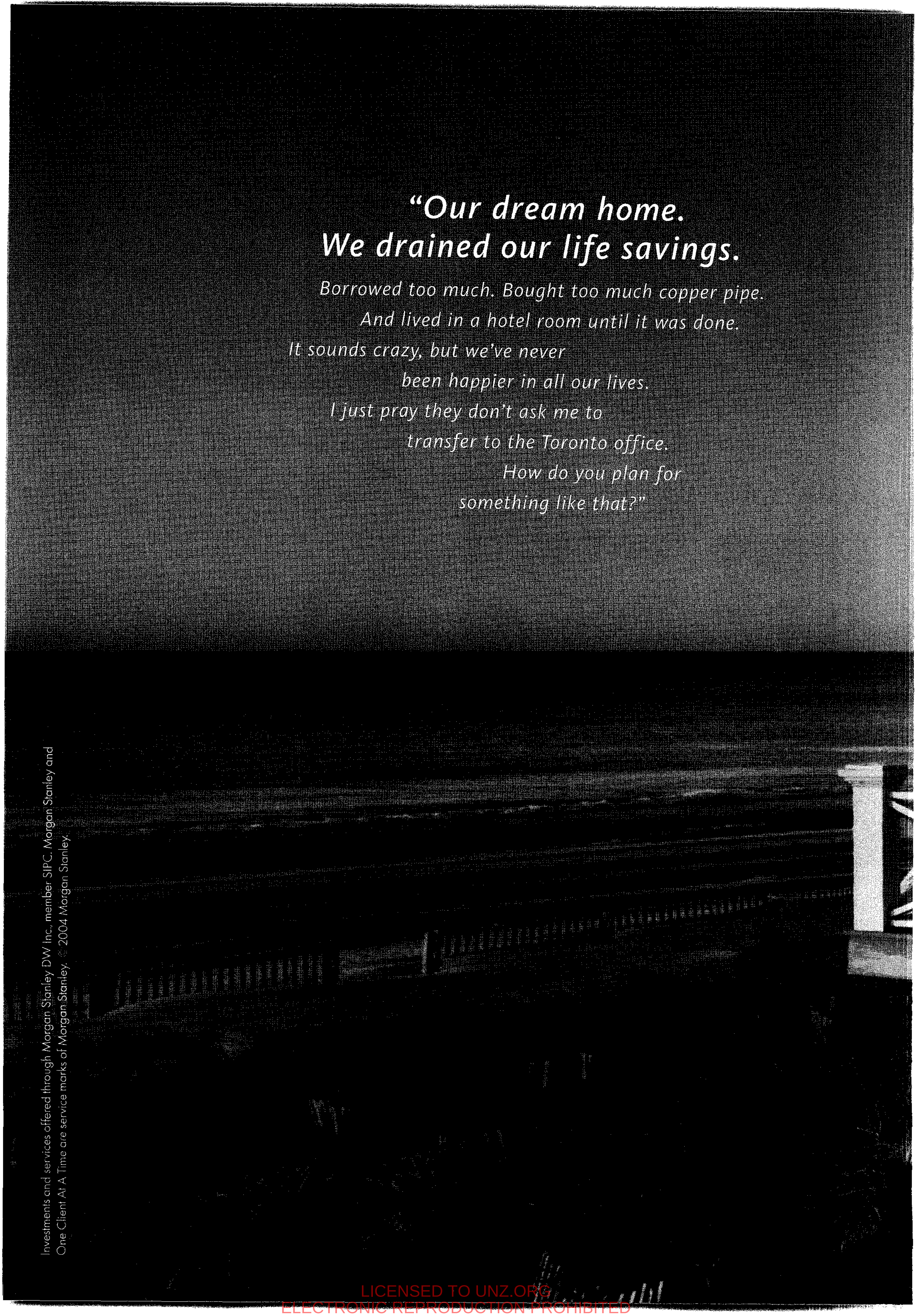
Among the results of the fall of Communism was the dissolution of the "internal empire," the fifteen republics of the old Soviet Union. And because Russia itself was made up of eighty-nine regions, some with a complicated history, Russia's borders, too, came into question. In the euphoria of the period, President Boris Yeltsin encouraged the various regions to assume as much sovereignty "as you can swallow." After decades of Soviet centralism, he was thinking of a reform of degrees. But Chechnya, which had bridled under Moscow's rule since the nineteenth century and suffered mass deportations and killings under Stalin, declared outright independence.



In 1994, Yeltsin invaded, encouraged by a circle of advisers who promised a "small and victorious war." It was neither. The Russians shelled Grozny. They rampaged through villages with tanks intended to make war on NATO. More than eighty thousand Chechens, almost all of them civilians, died. Tens of thousands were left homeless or fled to other parts of Russia. Grozny was reduced to rubble, and the republic to a state of lawless ruin much like Afghanistan after its war with the Soviet Union.

And out of a terrible war came terror. Shamil Basayev, the Chechen commander who likely ordered all the massacres of the past month—the murders in Beslan, the bombing of two airliners in flight, the bombing outside a Moscow subway station—came to Moscow as a young man, studied land management, and tried to sell computers for a living. In August, 1991, he was among the thousands of volunteers who helped defend the Russian White House, and Yeltsin, against the coup plotters. Then he re-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL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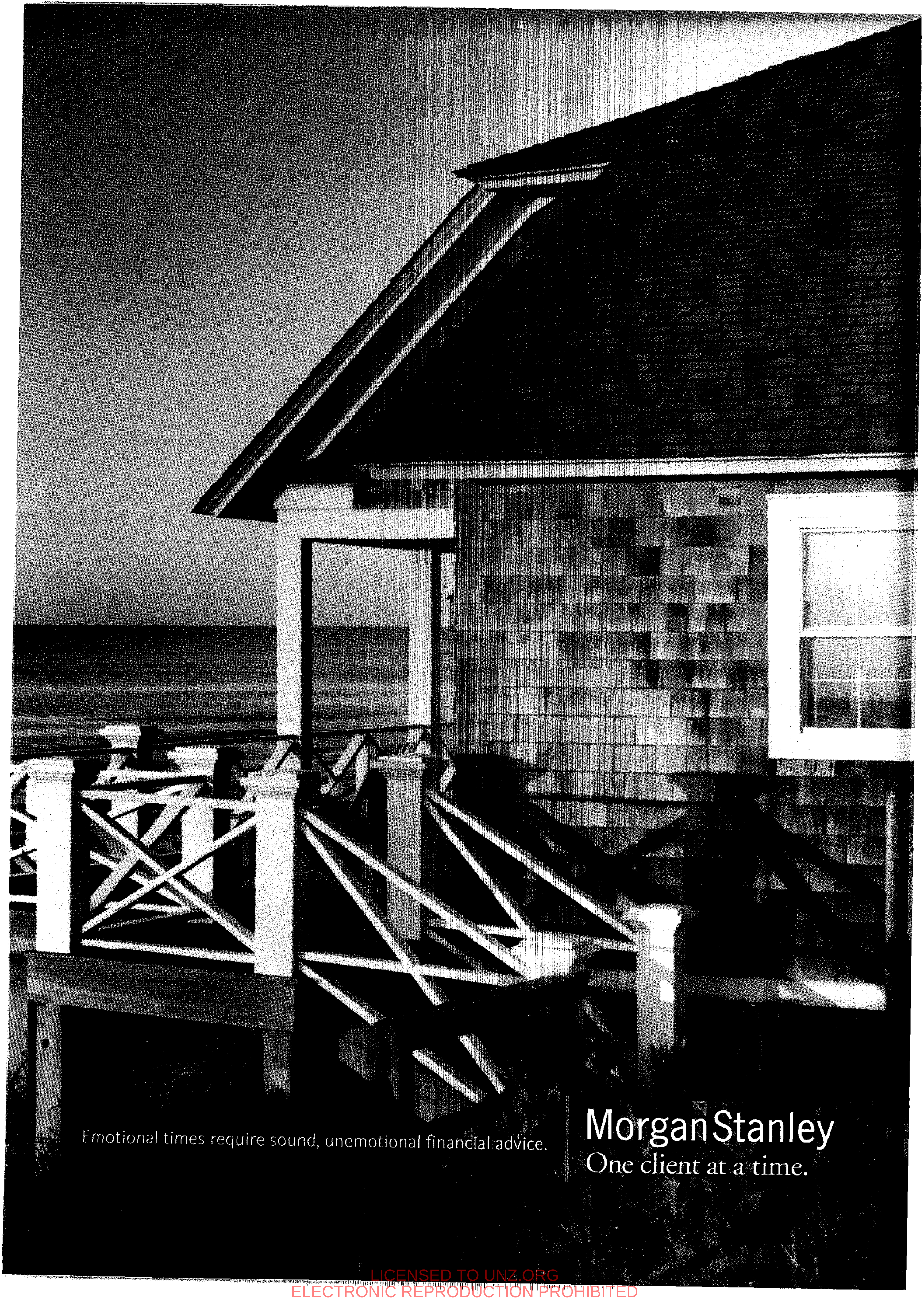
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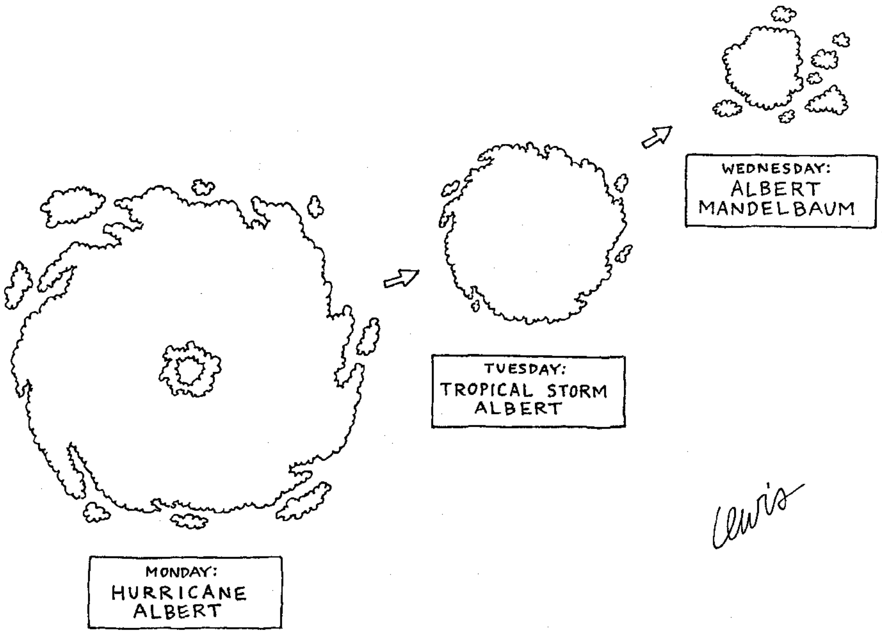


turned to Chechnya, where he joined the military wing of the independence movement. In 1995, with Grozny destroyed, Basayev and around a hundred of his men took more than a thousand hostages, including women and children, in the town of Budyonnovsk—an event that augured the rise of a new kind of insurgency.

Chechnya today is as close to a Hobbesian state as exists on earth. Grozny is a moonscape of gas fires, open sewers, and bombed-out buildings. There is almost no legitimate economy: at least seventy-five per cent of the Chechen workforce is unemployed. Criminal gangs dominate the social order. Politicians are assassinated; journalists and aid workers are abducted, even executed. The Russian Army troops who remain are corrupt, lawless, given to raping, kidnapping, and executing civilians. Whatever funds Moscow sends for rebuilding invariably end up stolen.

In recent years, especially since September 11, 2001, Putin has tried hard to paint Basayev as the equivalent of Osama bin Laden, and his men as linked closely with Al Qaeda. This is a complicated equation. Reports of Chechen rebels training with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan remain murky. There is no doubt, however, that Basayev and his followers in Chechnya have been deeply influenced by the tactics, ideology, and language of jihadists abroad. Basayev, who has a bushy beard and a clean-shaven pate, dispatches video and audio manifestos, affecting a bin Laden-like image as a holy warrior. He has taken on field commanders and advisers from Saudi Arabia. And he has cultivated a group of so-called "black widows," women willing to sacrifice themselves as hostage-takers, assassins, and suicide bombers.

Last week, in the wake of the massacre in Beslan, Putin gathered a group of Western reporters and scholars at his house outside Moscow and repudiated the idea of a negotiated settlement with the likes of Basayev. "Why don't you meet Osama bin Laden, invite him to Brussels or to the White House, engage in talks, ask him what he wants, and give it to him so he leaves you in peace?" he said. "You find it possible to set some limits on your dealings with these bastards, so why should we talk to people who are child-killers?"

Putin is an increasingly autocratic leader. He has neutered state-controlled television, compromised the rise of an independent judiciary, and impeded independent political movements and parties. *L'état, c'est Putin.* And yet he has no choice but to go after Basayev. The demands of the Chechen jihadists now extend beyond Chechen independence. As Basayev made plain with his incursion into the neighboring republic of Dagestan five years ago, he is interested in pure vengeance and in extending his reach throughout the northern Caucasus.

In the longer term, finding real negotiating partners will be harder than finding Basayev. "The Russian leadership constantly reiterates that it is fighting not Chechen separatists but international terrorists, and this has finally become a self-fulfilling prophecy," Andrei Piontkovsky, one of the leading political analysts in Moscow, has written. "Thanks to the methods with which we have waged this war, we have turned practically the whole population of Chechnya into enemies."

The note Putin struck most distinctly at the meeting with reporters and scholars was one of paranoia, fear that outside forces—the enemies he knew as a K.G.B. officer—were somehow undermining him. Those who mean to "tear off a big chunk of our country," he said, are being backed by those who "think that Russia, as one of the greatest nuclear powers of the world, is still a threat, and this threat has to be eliminated."

And so the Russian people, who live in dread of further violence, find themselves at the mercy of well-trained terrorists in the south and a paranoid President in the Kremlin who refuses the burdens of democratic accountability and the need to reshape a policy that is good for little but more bloodshed. It requires no tragic sense to suppose that things are likely to turn out as always before they turn out otherwise.

—*David Remnick*

DOWN THE STRETCH
CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

This week, the pennant race enters the homestretch, as the underdog Boston Red Sox, with their long hair and their mud-encrusted helmets, come to New York to try to catch the incumbent (and clean-shaven) Yankees. By now, thanks to the Democratic and Republican Conventions in Boston and New York and to the current Major League standings, the political analogies are entrenched, if not altogether precise: the Red Sox are Democrats, and the

Yankees the G.O.P. Strictly from a management perspective, the Red Sox are progressives, with a front office resembling an activist judiciary, jettisoning tradition at the recommendation of intellectual élites with little practical hardball experience but plenty of theory—in baseball, it's called sabermetrics—on their side. John Kerry is for the Red Sox, at least notionally, and the club's principal owner and its chairman have both donated to his campaign.

Then, in the Bronx, there's the imperial George Steinbrenner, no master of nuance. Steinbrenner gave money to President Bush, and pleaded guilty long ago to funnelling cash illegally to Richard Nixon. (He was eventually pardoned by Ronald Reagan.) He might well be called a compassionless conservative. (Manager Joe Torre, a friend of Rudy Giuliani's, is the compassionate one.) Or, as the Boston *Globe* columnist Dan Shaughnessy observed the other day, on the phone from Oakland, "There's definitely kind of a Steinbrenner-Dick Cheney connection. They seem to be like-minded guys." The Yankees resent the luxury tax that has been imposed so heavily on them by the commissioner's office. Very Republican.

"There is a strong tradition in baseball of not mixing politics with the game," Bill James, the Red Sox' resident sabermetrics guru, said last week, flip-flopping gamely. "One-run, close-to-the-vest, Gene Mauch baseball," he went on, referring to the old California Angels manager, who was a staunch traditionalist, "can be analogized as conservative baseball, whereas Red Sox beat-your-brains-in baseball could be regarded as liberal baseball." Of course, the Yankees, who lead the league in home runs, also play beat-your-brains-in ball. "On the other hand," James continued, "we are 'conservative' on the base paths, not because we are opposed to baserunning but because we don't want to waste our resources."

The lines do blur. When the Red Sox president, Larry Lucchino, called his rivals an "evil empire," was he embracing the internationalist critique of Yankee greed or invoking the hawkish rhetoric of Ronald Reagan? Last season, the Sox adopted a populist rallying slogan, "Cowboy Up," which seems more Bush than Kerry. And, sure, the Yankees are spoiled fat cats who plunder the baseball world's resources without concern for fans in Kansas City and Montreal. But then so are the Red Sox; they're only marginally less fat. Whether or not there are two Americas, it seems increasingly clear that there are two Major League Baseballs. (Ralph Nader, you might say, represents the hapless and impoverished Tampa Bay Devil Rays, whom the Yankees exploited last week at Boston's expense.)

This week's three-game matchup will be followed by another, next week, in Boston. Think of the games as candidate debates, in which the opponents look to score incidental blows and small, moral victories in advance of the big showdown. And then, because baseball offers a consolation unavailable to politicians, the loser will likely be rewarded with a wild card—and another shot at the title, regardless of the division race. It would be like having a real Election Day a week after Election Day. With this in mind, Shaughnessy has already looked ahead and calculated that the seventh game of the World Series would be played on Halloween, a Sunday. "The American League has home-field advantage this year, so they'd be playing Sunday at Fenway," he said, hopefully. "And the election is two days later, so it's already occurred to me that the victory parade would be Election Day. The parade's always Tuesday, and, with Kerry running, it'd just be an interesting mix."

John Kerry

It would be an interesting mix, yes, and one that isn't likely to bode well for Kerry's count in the popular vote. Think about it: after eighty-six years of suffering, would the registered voters of New England—i.e., the Democratic base—dare skip the most heavily anticipated celebration in modern sports history merely to cast ballots for a fair-weather fan?

—*Ben McGrath*

THE HOME FRONT
NAMES

Eighteen months ago, several hundred people gathered outside Senator Charles Schumer's apartment building on Prospect Park West, in Brooklyn. They were there to protest, with a candlelight vigil, the approaching invasion of Iraq, which Schumer had voted to authorize. Jessica Epstein, a spirited young protester, was, like most of the people there, stooped awkwardly over her candle, trying to keep it lit. She said, with some agitation, "My roommate said, 'Why are you bothering Schumer at his home?' But this goes so far beyond bothering someone at his home. This is a war that's going to kill thousands of people."

When the Pentagon announced last week that the number of American troops killed in Iraq had passed a thousand—and it is generally believed that the number of Iraqi civilians killed may be more than ten times that—a coalition of peace groups staged a new round of vigils, this time to commemorate the dead. Judging from the protest held at Columbus Circle, amid the remnants of Hurricane Frances, no one has yet figured out how to maintain a dignified posture while carrying a lighted candle in the wind and rain. Still, a certain majesty was achieved by the simplicity of the ceremony: a sombre reading, without commentary, of the names of the fallen, and their ages.

"Mark D. Taylor, forty-one."

"David K. Fribley, twenty-six."

"Michael W. Mitchell, twenty-five."

"Jesse J. Martinez, twenty."

The readers were a relay of men and women, old and young. Some were from military families. After the pronouncement of each name, the crowd would repeat it, with an effect that was softly sacramental. At intervals, a scholarly-looking man who was clearly familiar with Arabic pronunciation read from a vast but fragmentary list of the Iraqi civilian dead.

"Akil Hussain Naim, eleven."

"Seventeen members of the family of Abud Sarhan."

"Bassam Sami Awwad, nine."

"Wife and three children of Mahmoud Ali Hamadi."

The crowd, which was gathered around the fountain steps of the Maine Monument, on the northeast corner of Columbus Circle, peaked at about three hundred, early in the evening, and then dwindled steadily. One hard downpour drove away many people at once.

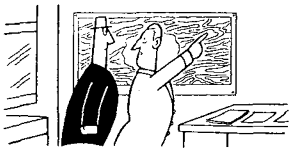
Parked firmly at the rear edge of the group throughout the ceremony was a middle-aged man in a wheelchair. He had close-cropped hair and was dressed all in black. He was alone and spoke to no one. When approached by a stranger, however, he turned out to be friendly, even voluble. His name was Steve Hausheer. He was a veteran, he said, and a big John Kerry supporter. "Kerry understands military matters better than Bush does," Hausheer said. "This whole mess shows what can happen when a President takes his eye off the ball. I want to see our troops get home safely, as many as possible, as soon as possible. No more like this." Hausheer returned his attention to the ceremony. His handshake was bone-crushing, his smile unnervingly serious.

While the crowd shrank to a few dozen, watched over by a handful of policemen, some protesters attempted to engage passersby. "Come join us, no matter what you think of the war," Alice Klugherz pleaded. "These are the dead." Klugherz, a performance artist with R. Crumb hair who lives in the East Village, was having no luck recruiting people. "They just think we're obnoxious, like we're saying, 'Come love Jesus,' " she said.

Patricia McHugh took a different approach. A gray-haired librarian who lives in the neighborhood, she was pronouncing the names of the dead, and their ages, with unusual precision. She spoke not into the center of the dwindling crowd of protesters but outside the circle, into the faces of those pedestrians who would consent to meet her gaze. She got strong responses, she reported, especially from young men. "When I say the name of a young American man, and his age, to young males, they get it immediately."

—*William Finnegan*

DEPT. OF FOREIGN RELATIONS
THE BORAT DOCTRINE



Roman Vassilenko, the press secretary for the Embassy of Kazakhstan, wants to clear up a few misconceptions about his country. Women are not kept in cages. The national sport is not shooting a dog and then having a party. You cannot earn a living being a Gypsy catcher. Wine is not made from fermented horse urine. It is not customary for a man to grab another man's *khrum*. "*Khrum*" is not the word for testicles.

These falsehoods, and many others, have been spread by Borat, a character on "Da Ali G Show," which recently finished its second season on HBO. Like Ali G, Borat is played by Sacha Baron Cohen, a British comedian who specializes in prank interviews. As Borat, Cohen has told a dating service that he is looking for a girl with "plow experience," persuaded a meeting of Oklahoma City officials to observe a ten-minute silence in memory of the (fictitious) Tishnik Massacre, and, most notably, led a country-and-Western bar in a sing-along of "In My Country There Is Problem," whose chorus goes: "Throw the Jew down the well / So my country can be free / You must grab him by his horns / Then we have a big party."

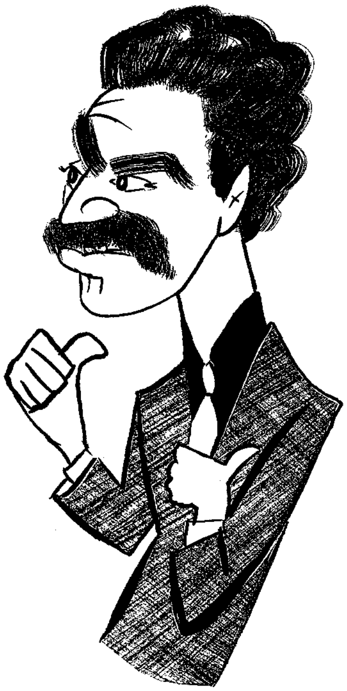
It was partly Borat's casual but relentless anti-Semitism that led Vassilenko to object publicly, in a letter to *The Hill*, a Washington weekly. (In real life, Cohen is an observant Jew, but the Anti-Defamation League also condemned him, arguing that "the irony may have been lost on some of the audience.") "He says things that make people think that Kazakhstan really is a backward country," Vassilenko said last week from his office in Washington. In Borat's Kazakhstan, Jews attack people with their claws, and "Dirty Jew" is a popular film. But the real Kazakhstan has long embraced its thriving Jewish community, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, and earlier this month the country dedicated the largest synagogue in Central Asia. "The President of the country came down, as well as the chief rabbi of Israel," Vassilenko said. "There were all kinds of rabbis from around the world, and a New Yorker. He was not a rabbi, but you might be interested to know the name. The name is Ronald Lauder."

Vassilenko is also chagrined at Borat's portrayal of women in Kazakh society, epitomized by his claim that "in Kazakhstan we say, 'God, man, horse, dog, then woman, then rat.' " Vassilenko said, "I don't think our women like that, not to mention the men. We have women ministers, women judges, businesspeople." Nor should Borat have been appalled, as he was in one episode, to learn that American women can vote. American and Kazakh women both got the vote, Vassilenko pointed out, on August 26, 1920.

It turns out that almost nothing about Borat's Kazakhstan withstands scrutiny. Borat doesn't look like an ethnic Kazakh. His Kazakh words "resemble some gibberish Polish," Vassilenko said. And, while Borat has claimed that "in Kazakhstan the favorite hobbies are disco dancing, archery, rape, and table tennis," Vassilenko concedes only the first and the last. Archery is "not prominent," he said, and statistics show that the Kazakh sexual-assault rate is far lower than the United States'. (That may be because the crime is more likely to go unreported.)

So what *is* the national sport of Kazakhstan? "The most known ones are wrestling and all kinds of sports that try people in how they master horses," Vassilenko said. "Kazakhs were traditional nomads, so there are various sports like horse races. Another horseback sport is called something like Catch a—what is name?—Catch a Bride. And that is that a group of young guys race to get a bride, and she races away from them and they have to catch her while she fends them off with a whip." This sport does not result in actual matrimony—just a kiss.

According to Borat, a Kazakh man gets a wife by buying a woman from her father for fifteen gallons of insecticide. Vassilenko disputes this, too: "The men propose marriage with engagement rings." There is an old tradition—"maybe a hundred years ago," Vassilenko said—of men kidnapping their brides, but he claims that the practice is virtually obsolete. Also, he said, "If you want to do it for fun, you can do that," but the woman has to be in on it.



Borat

Travel guides mention a Kazakh sport called *kokpar*, a precursor of polo. When Vassilenko was asked about it, he hesitated, then explained, "That's the one where a goat, a dead goat"—a headless dead goat—"is, um, being held as a sort of a prize. And then one rider has it, and he has to run away with it from others who seek to catch it and snatch it from him." And then they have a party.

—*Daniel Radosh*

BEQUESTS
A HANDYMAN'S GIFT

Joe Temeczko kept his past mostly to himself. In Minneapolis, where he lived, his friends knew little about him other than that he was a handyman who spoke broken English and ate past-date cakes. A gregarious neighborhood fixture with a mouth full of gold teeth, he was fond of scavenging in garbage cans for broken toys, fixing them up, and giving them to children.

A few days after the World Trade Center towers fell, in 2001, Temeczko, who was eighty-six, called his lawyer, William K. Wangensteen, and said that he wanted to leave all his money to New York City: "So much suffering. Maybe my money can help." Wangensteen says that Temeczko was overjoyed when he changed his will: "He said, 'Shouldn't we call Mayor Giuliani?' I said, 'That seems a little premature, Joe.' " Two weeks later, while dragging a length of garden hose, Temeczko collapsed and died.

When Wangensteen went through Temeczko's effects, he learned that his client had been born in Poland in 1915. Photographs of Temeczko in his twenties showed an affluent-looking young man with a fondness for ascots. After fighting with the Polish Army in the Second World War, Temeczko spent time in both German and Russian prison camps, which is where his teeth deteriorated, because he had gnawed on bones. Around 1950, Temeczko arrived at Ellis Island. He worked for a time helping to clean the Statue of Liberty; later, in Minneapolis, he taped a poster of the statue to his living-room wall. And, over the years, he somehow amassed more than a million four hundred thousand dollars.

The story of how Joe Temeczko's life savings were received in a city with a budget of some forty-seven billion dollars is a bureaucratic *opéra bouffe*. For months, the Mayor's office failed to acknowledge the gift. Finally, in February of last year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Gifford Miller announced that the bequest would help fund two projects. Most of the money would go to Columbus Park, in Chinatown, where it would pay for replacing a decrepit asphalt sports field with synthetic turf. The remaining three hundred thousand dollars would go to the Daffodil Project, which is responsible for getting two and a half million daffodil bulbs planted around the city to honor the victims of September 11th.

Nineteen months after the announcement, the money remains unspent. Chinatown community groups, led by Friends of Columbus Park and the Columbus Park Exercise Group, have held up construction; they maintain that synthetic turf is slippery and unsafe. They also worry that it would make the park more attractive to corporate softball teams and displace the Chinese-Americans who use the hard surface for volleyball, roller hockey, and tai chi. Furthermore, as the Eastern Regional Dragon Boat Association pointed out, "asphalt is easier to maintain and clean, especially for dog and human feces."

These critics have frustrated Paul J. Q. Lee, who represents Chinatown Community Members in Support of the Joseph Temeczko Gift (a committee composed more or less of Paul J. Q. Lee). Lee is the sort of dedicated activist who arrives at community meetings with a shopping bag containing a chunk of asphalt and swatches of synthetic turf. Standing on the cracked pavement of the ballfield last week, he said, "These groups are saying, 'We just want the money, and the Chinese community will decide what to do with it.' It's the antithesis of what Joe Temeczko was trying to do, of the whole 9/11 spirit. It sucks!" The Parks Department has proposed a compromise in which only about sixty per cent of the field would be covered with turf, with a track around it. Lee isn't in favor of it. "That means no baseball at all—no baseball!" he said. "It's un-American."

Adrian Benepe, the city's Parks and Recreation Commissioner, says he hopes that the improvements will eventually "make most people mostly happy." The son of a Polish immigrant himself, Benepe takes the long view on the question of which New Yorkers will benefit from Temeczko's gift: "That area wasn't Chinatown a hundred years ago and it may have a completely different population twenty years from now. We're building for flexible use, for the future."

He added that Temeczko would have appreciated how the remaining three hundred thousand dollars of his bequest is being spent. "Daffodils are the most faithful of flowers," he said. "And yellow is the color of hope." But Temeczko's money hasn't bought any bulbs yet; it's still with the city's Office of Management and Budget, a bureaucracy even more formidable than the Columbus Park Exercise Group. City officials did, however, arrange for Temeczko's ashes to be scattered in Manhattan. It was against city practice but hardly, given the backdrop of September 11th, un-American.

—*Tad Friend*

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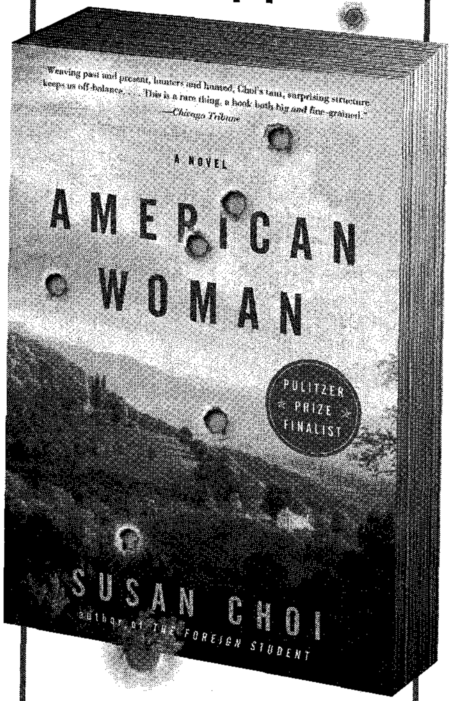
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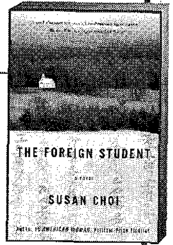

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ANNALS OF PSYCHOLOGY

PERSONALITY PLUS

Employers love personality tests. But what do they really reveal?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

When Alexander (Sandy) Nininger was twenty-three, and newly commissioned as a lieutenant in the United States Army, he was sent to the South Pacific to serve with the 57th Infantry of the Philippine Scouts. It was January, 1942. The Japanese had just seized Philippine ports at Vigan, Legazpi, Lamon Bay, and Lingayen, and forced the American and Philippine forces to retreat into Bataan, a rugged peninsula on the South China Sea. There, besieged and outnumbered, the Americans set to work building a defensive line, digging foxholes and constructing dikes and clearing underbrush to provide unobstructed sight lines for rifles and machine guns. Nininger's men were on the line's right flank. They labored day and night. The heat and the mosquitoes were nearly unbearable.

Quiet by nature, Nininger was tall and slender, with wavy blond hair. As Franklin M. Reck recounts in "Beyond the Call of Duty," Nininger had graduated near the top of his class at West Point, where he chaired the lecture-and-entertainment committee. He had spent many hours with a friend, discussing everything from history to the theory of relativity. He loved the theatre. In the evenings, he could often be found sitting by the fireplace in the living room of his commanding officer, sipping tea and listening to Tchaikovsky. As a boy, he once saw his father kill a hawk and had been repulsed. When he went into active service, he wrote a friend to say that he had no feelings of hate, and did not think he could ever kill anyone out of hatred. He had none of the swagger of the natural warrior. He worked hard and had a strong sense of duty.

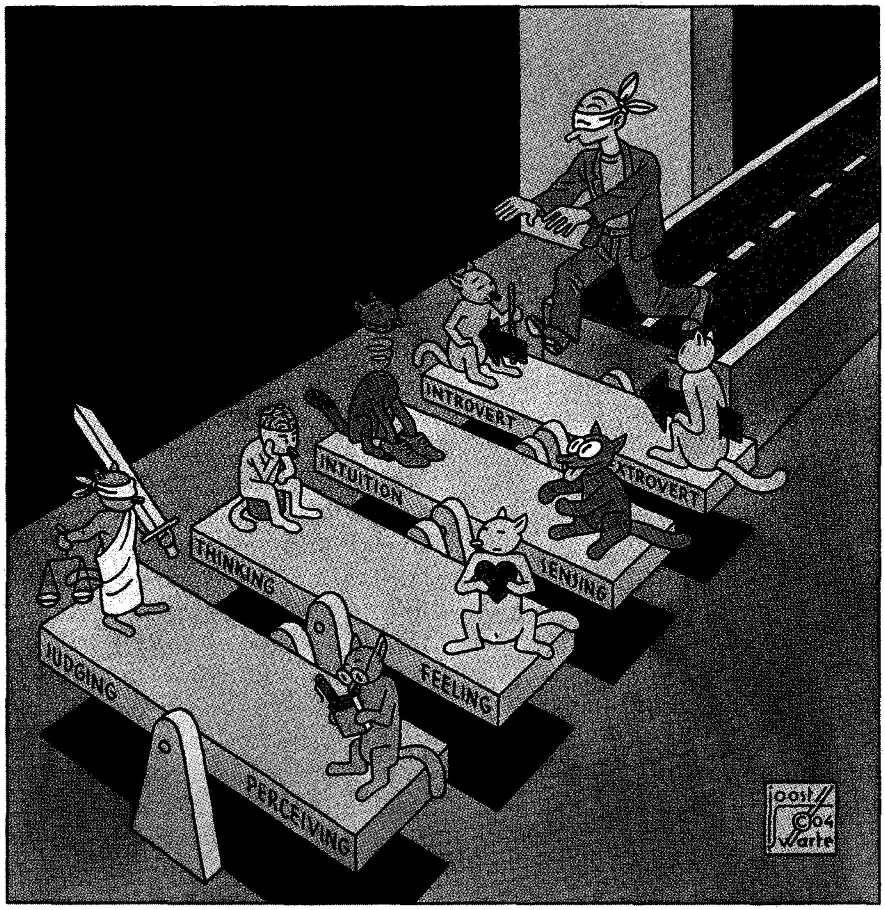
In the second week of January, the Japanese attacked, slipping hundreds of snipers through the American lines, climbing into trees, turning the battlefield into what Reck calls a "gigantic possum hunt." On the morning of January 12th, Nininger went to his commanding officer. He wanted, he said, to be assigned to another company, one that was in the thick of the action, so he could go hunting for Japanese snipers.

He took several grenades and ammunition belts, slung a Garand rifle over his shoulder, and grabbed a submachine gun. Starting at the point where the fighting was heaviest—near the position of the battalion's K Company—he crawled through the jungle and shot a Japanese soldier out of a tree. He shot and killed snipers. He threw grenades into enemy positions. He was wounded in the leg, but he kept going, clearing out Japanese positions for the other members of K Company, behind him. He soon ran out of grenades and switched to his rifle, and then, when he ran out of ammunition, used only his bayonet. He was wounded a second time, but when a medic crawled toward him to help bring him back behind the lines Nininger waved him off. He saw a Japanese bunker up ahead. As he leaped out of a shell hole, he was spun around by a bullet to the shoulder, but he kept charging at the bunker, where a Japanese officer and two enlisted men were dug in. He dispatched one soldier with a double thrust of his bayonet, clubbed down the other, and bayonetted the officer. Then, with outstretched arms, he collapsed face down. For his heroism, Nininger was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the first American soldier so decorated in the Second World War.

Suppose that you were a senior Army officer in the early days of the Second World War and were trying to put together a crack team of fearless and ferocious fighters. Sandy Nininger, it now appears, had exactly the right kind of personality for that assignment, but is there any way you could have known this beforehand? It clearly wouldn't have helped to ask Nininger if he was fearless and ferocious, because he didn't know that he was fearless and ferocious. Nor would it have worked to talk to people who spent time with him. His friend would have told you only that Nininger was quiet and thoughtful and loved the theatre, and his commanding officer would have talked about the evenings of tea and Tchaikovsky. With the exception, perhaps, of the Scarlet Pimpernel, a love of music, theatre, and long afternoons in front of a teapot is not a known predictor of great valor. What you need is some kind of sophisticated psychological instrument, capable of getting to the heart of his personality.

Over the course of the past century, psychology has been consumed with the search for this kind of magical instrument. Hermann Rorschach proposed that great meaning lay in the way that people described inkblots. The creators of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory believed in the revelatory power of true-false items such as "I have never had any black, tarry-looking bowel movements" or "If the money were right, I would like to work for a circus or a carnival." Today, Annie Murphy Paul tells us in her fascinating new book, "Cult of Personality," that there are twenty-five hundred kinds of personality tests. Testing is a four-hundred-million-dollar-a-year industry. A hefty percentage of American corporations use personality tests as part of the hiring and promotion process. The tests figure in custody battles and in sentencing and parole decisions. "Yet despite their prevalence—and the importance of the matters they are called upon to decide—personality tests have received surprisingly little scrutiny," Paul writes. We can call in the psychologists. We can give Sandy Nininger a battery of tests. But will any of it help?

One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (M.B.T.I.), a psychological-assessment system based on Carl Jung's notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. Some people are extroverts, some are introverts. Some process information through logical thought. Some are directed by their feelings. Some make sense of the world through intuitive leaps. Others collect data through their senses. To these three categories—(I)ntroversion/(E)xtroversion, i(N)tuition/(S)ensing, (T)hinking/(F)eeling—the Myers-Briggs test adds a fourth: (J)udging/(P)erceiving. Judgers "like to live in a planned, orderly way, seeking to regulate and manage their lives," according to an M.B.T.I. guide, whereas Perceivers "like to live in a flexible, spontaneous way, seeking to experience and understand life, rather than control it." The M.B.T.I. asks the test-taker to answer a series of "forced-choice" questions, where one choice identifies you as belonging to one of these paired traits. The basic test takes twenty minutes, and at the end you are presented with a precise, multidimensional summary of your personality—your type might be INTJ or ESFP, or some other combination. Two and a half million Americans a year take the Myers-Briggs. Eighty-nine companies out of the Fortune 100 make use of it, for things like hiring or training sessions to help employees "understand" themselves or their colleagues. Annie Murphy Paul says that at the eminent consulting firm McKinsey, " 'associates' often know their colleagues' four-letter M.B.T.I. types by heart," the way they might know their own weight or (this being McKinsey) their S.A.T. scores.



Eighty-nine of the Fortune 100 companies use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

JOOST SWARTE

It is tempting to think, then, that we could figure out the Myers-Briggs type that corresponds best to commando work, and then test to see whether Sandy Nininger fits the profile. Unfortunately, the notion of personality type is not nearly as straightforward as it appears. For example, the Myers-Briggs poses a series of items grouped around the issue of whether you—the test-taker—are someone who likes to plan your day or evening beforehand or someone who prefers to be spontaneous. The idea is obviously to determine whether you belong to the Judger or Perceiver camp, but the basic question here is surprisingly hard to answer. I think I'm someone who likes to be spontaneous. On the other hand, I have embarked on too many spontaneous evenings that ended up with my friends and me standing on the sidewalk, looking at each other and

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wondering what to do next. So I guess I'm a spontaneous person who recognizes that life usually goes more smoothly if I plan first, or, rather, I'm a person who prefers to be spontaneous only if there's someone around me who isn't. Does that make me spontaneous or not? I'm not sure. I suppose it means that I'm somewhere in the middle.

This is the first problem with the Myers-Briggs. It assumes that we are either one thing or another—Intuitive or Sensing, Introverted or Extroverted. But personality doesn't fit into neat binary categories: we fall somewhere along a continuum.

Here's another question:

> Would you rather work under a boss (or a teacher) who is
> good-natured but often inconsistent, or
> sharp-tongued but always logical?

On the Myers-Briggs, this is one of a series of questions intended to establish whether you are a Thinker or a Feeler. But I'm not sure I know how to answer this one, either. I once had a good-natured boss whose inconsistency bothered me, because he exerted a great deal of day-to-day control over my work. Then I had a boss who was quite consistent and very sharp-tongued—but at that point I was in a job where day-to-day dealings with my boss were minimal, so his sharp tongue didn't matter that much. So what do I want in a boss? As far as I can tell, the only plausible answer is: It depends. The Myers-Briggs assumes that who we are is consistent from one situation to another. But surely what we want in a boss, and how we behave toward our boss, is affected by what kind of job we have.

This is the gist of the now famous critique that the psychologist Walter Mischel has made of personality testing. One of Mischel's studies involved watching children interact with one another at a summer camp. Aggressiveness was among the traits that he was interested in, so he watched the children in five different situations: how they behaved when approached by a peer, when teased by a peer, when praised by an adult, when punished by an adult, and when warned by an adult. He found that how aggressively a child responded in one of those situations wasn't a good predictor of how that same child responded in another situation. Just because a boy was aggressive in the face of being teased by another boy didn't mean that he would be aggressive in the face of being warned by an adult. On the other hand, if a child responded aggressively to being teased by a peer one day, it was a pretty good indicator that he'd respond aggressively to being teased by a peer the next day. We have a personality in the sense that we have a consistent pattern of behavior. But that pattern is complex and that personality is contingent: it represents an interaction between our internal disposition and tendencies and the situations that we find ourselves in.

It's not surprising, then, that the Myers-Briggs has a large problem with consistency: according to some studies, more than half of those who take the test a second time end up with a different score than when they took it the first time. Since personality is continuous, not dichotomous, clearly some people who are borderline Introverts or Feelers one week slide over to Extroversion or Thinking the next week. And since personality is contingent, not stable, how we answer is affected by which circumstances are foremost in our minds when we take the test. If I happen to remember my first boss, then I come out as a Thinker. If my mind is on my second boss, I come out as a Feeler. When I took the Myers-Briggs, I scored as an INTJ. But, if odds are that I'm going to be something else if I take the test again, what good is it?

Once, for fun, a friend and I devised our own personality test. Like the M.B.T.I., it has four dimensions. The first is Canine/Feline. In romantic relationships, are you the pursuer, who runs happily to the door, tail wagging? Or are you the pursued? The second is More/Different. Is it your intellectual style to gather and master as much information as you can or to make imaginative use of a discrete amount of information? The third is Insider/Outsider. Do you get along with your parents or do you define yourself outside your relationship with your mother and father? And, finally, there is Nibbler/Gobbler. Do you work steadily, in small increments, or do everything at once, in a big gulp? I'm quite pleased with the personality inventory we devised. It directly touches on four aspects of life and temperament—

romance, cognition, family, and work style—that are only hinted at by Myers-Briggs. And it can be completed in under a minute, nineteen minutes faster than Myers-Briggs, an advantage not to be dismissed in today's fast-paced business environment. Of course, the four traits it measures are utterly arbitrary, based on what my friend and I came up with over the course of a phone call. But then again surely *all* universal dichotomous typing systems are arbitrary.

Where did the Myers-Briggs come from, after all? As Paul tells us, it began with a housewife from Washington, D.C., named Katharine Briggs, at the turn of the last century. Briggs had a daughter, Isabel, an only child for whom (as one relative put it) she did "everything but breathe." When Isabel was still in her teens, Katharine wrote a book-length manuscript about her daughter's remarkable childhood, calling her a "genius" and "a little Shakespeare." When Isabel went off to Swarthmore College, in 1915, the two exchanged letters nearly every day. Then, one day, Isabel brought home her college boyfriend and announced that they were to be married. His name was Clarence (Chief) Myers. He was tall and handsome and studying to be a lawyer, and he could not have been more different from the Briggs women. Katharine and Isabel were bold and imaginative and intuitive. Myers was practical and logical and detail-oriented. Katharine could not understand her future son-in-law. "When the blissful young couple returned to Swarthmore," Paul writes, "Katharine retreated to her study, intent on 'figuring out Chief.' "

She began to read widely in psychology and philosophy. Then, in 1923, she came across the first English translation of Carl Jung's "Psychological Types." "This is it!" Katharine told her daughter. Paul recounts, "In a dramatic display of conviction she burned all her own research and adopted Jung's book as her 'Bible,' as she gushed in a letter to the man himself. His system explained it all: Lyman [Katharine's husband], Katharine, Isabel, and Chief were introverts; the two men were thinkers, while the women were feelers; and of course the Briggses were intuitives, while Chief was a senser." Encouraged by her mother, Isabel—who was living in Swarthmore and writing mystery novels—devised a paper-and-pencil test to help people identify which of the Jungian categories they belonged to, and then spent the rest of her life tirelessly and brilliantly promoting her creation.

The problem, as Paul points out, is that Myers and her mother did not actually understand Jung at all. Jung didn't believe that types were easily identifiable, and he didn't believe that people could be permanently slotted into one category or another. "Every individual is an exception to the rule," he wrote; to "stick labels on people at first sight," in his view, was "nothing but a childish parlor game." Why is a parlor game based on my desire to entertain my friends any less valid than a parlor game based on Katharine Briggs's obsession with her son-in-law?

The problems with the Myers-Briggs suggest that we need a test that is responsive to the complexity and variability of the human personality. And that is why, not long ago, I found myself in the office of a psychologist from New Jersey named Lon Gieser. He is among the country's leading experts on what is called the Thematic Apperception Test (T.A.T.), an assessment tool developed in the nineteen-thirties by Henry Murray, one of the most influential psychologists of the twentieth century.

I sat in a chair facing Gieser, as if I were his patient. He had in his hand two dozen or so pictures—mostly black-and-white drawings—on legal-sized cards, all of which had been chosen by Murray years before. "These pictures present a series of scenes," Gieser said to me. "What I want you to do with each scene is tell a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end." He handed me the first card. It was of a young boy looking at a violin. I had imagined, as Gieser was describing the test to me, that it would be hard to come up with stories to match the pictures. As I quickly discovered, though, the exercise

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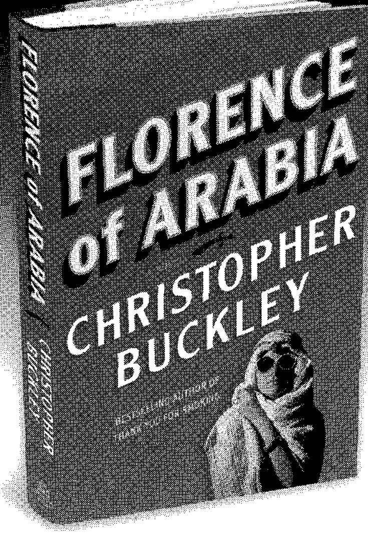

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was relatively effortless: the stories just tumbled out.

“This is a young boy,” I began.

> His parents want him to take up the violin, and they’ve been encouraging him. I think he is uncertain whether he wants to be a violin player, and maybe even resents the imposition of having to play this instrument, which doesn’t seem to have any appeal for him. He’s not excited or thrilled about this. He’d rather be somewhere else. He’s just sitting there looking at it, and dreading having to fulfill this parental obligation.

I continued in that vein for a few more minutes. Gieser gave me another card, this one of a muscular man clinging to a rope and looking off into the distance. “He’s climbing up, not climbing down,” I said, and went on:

> It’s out in public. It’s some kind of big square, in Europe, and there is some kind of spectacle going on. It’s the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The King is coming by in a carriage, and this man is shimmying up, so he can see over everyone else and get a better view of the King. I don’t get the sense that he’s any kind of highborn person. I think he aspires to be more than he is. And he’s kind of getting a glimpse of the King as a way of giving himself a sense of what he could be, or what his own future could be like.

We went on like this for the better part of an hour, as I responded to twelve cards—each of people in various kinds of ambiguous situations. One picture showed a woman slumped on the ground, with some small object next to her; another showed an attractive couple in a kind of angry embrace, apparently having an argument. (I said that the fight they were having was staged, that each was simply playing a role.) As I talked, Gieser took notes. Later, he called me and gave me his impressions. “What came out was the way you deal with emotion,” he said. “Even when you recognized the emotion, you distanced yourself from it. The underlying motive is this desire to avoid conflict. The other thing is that when there are opportunities to go to someone else and work stuff out, your character is always going off alone. There is a real avoidance of emotion and dealing with other people, and everyone goes to their own corners and works things out on their own.”

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF ANNE VERVEINE, VII

Distance was the house in which I welcomed you.
But it was in the river
that we became cadence, there where the current braided

together again, after the stone bridge stanchion parted the stream.
It was to last only as long as the beauty lasted.
Do you believe in the soul?

Words torn from the void, wet and mewling.
Where we walked on the mountain, water
poured around us, surged up from springs, seethed

down in rivulets, rocky streams, and one long blinding cascade:
your kisses were an *eau-de-vie* and as bitter.
I am poured out like water.

Distance is feminine in French.
I held a knife to a man’s throat and let him bleed quietly into a cup.
What does “us” mean?

Coiled serpentine headdress of Leonardo’s woman:
you wanted her. I wanted you.
Chill sunlight flexing itself on the city river

gave me the emptiness I needed
to write these instructions: Sorrow
is a liqueur. Drink deep. We will all be consumed.

—*Rosanna Warren*

How could Gieser make such a confident reading of my personality after listening to me for such a short time? I was baffled by this, at first, because I felt that I had told a series of random and idiosyncratic stories. When I listened to the tape I had made of the session, though, I saw what Gieser had picked up on: my stories were exceedingly repetitive in just the way that he had identified. The final card that Gieser gave me was blank, and he asked me to imagine my own picture and tell a story about it. For some reason, what came to mind was Andrew Wyeth’s famous painting “Christina’s World,” of a woman alone in a field, her hair being blown by the wind. She was from the city, I said, and had come home to see her family in the country: “I think she is taking a walk. She is pondering some piece of important news. She has gone off from the rest of the people to think about it.” Only later did I realize that in the actual painting the woman is not strolling through the field. She is crawling, desperately, on her hands and knees. How obvious could my aversion to strong emotion be?

The T.A.T. has a number of cards that are used to assess achievement—that is, how interested someone is in getting ahead and succeeding in life. One is the card of the man on the rope; another is the boy looking at his violin. Gieser, in listening to my stories, concluded that I was very low in achievement:

> Some people say this kid is dreaming about being a great violinist, and he’s going to make it. With you, it wasn’t what he wanted to do at all. His parents were making him do it. With the rope climbing, some people do this Tarzan thing. They climb the pole and get to the top and feel this great achievement. You have him going up the rope—and why is he feeling the pleasure? Because he’s seeing the King. He’s still a nobody in the public square, looking at the King.

Now, this is a little strange. I consider myself quite ambitious. On a questionnaire, if you asked me to rank how important getting ahead and being successful was to me, I’d check the “very important” box. But Gieser is suggesting that the T.A.T. allowed him to glimpse another dimension of my personality.

This idea—that our personality can hold contradictory elements—is at the heart of "Strangers to Ourselves," by the social psychologist Timothy D. Wilson. He is one of the discipline's most prominent researchers, and his book is what popular psychology ought to be (and rarely is): thoughtful, beautifully written, and full of unexpected insights. Wilson's interest is in what he calls the "adaptive unconscious" (not to be confused with the Freudian unconscious). The adaptive unconscious, in Wilson's description, is a big computer in our brain which sits below the surface and evaluates, filters, and looks for patterns in the mountain of data that come in through our senses. That system, Wilson argues, has a personality: it has a set of patterns and responses and tendencies that are laid down by our genes and our early-childhood experiences. These patterns are stable and hard to change, and we are only dimly aware of them. On top of that, in his schema we have another personality: it's the conscious identity that we create for ourselves with the choices we make, the stories we tell about ourselves, and the formal reasons we come up with to explain our motives and feelings. Yet this "constructed self" has no particular connection with the personality of our adaptive unconscious. In fact, they could easily be at odds. Wilson writes:

> The adaptive unconscious is more likely to influence people's uncontrolled, implicit responses, whereas the constructed self is more likely to influence people's deliberative, explicit responses. For example, the quick, spontaneous decision of whether to argue with a co-worker is likely to be under the control of one's nonconscious needs for power and affiliation. A more thoughtful decision about whether to invite a co-worker over for dinner is more likely to be under the control of one's conscious, self-attributed motives.

When Gieser said that he thought I was low in achievement, then, he presumably saw in my stories an unconscious ambivalence toward success. The T.A.T., he believes, allowed him to go beyond the way I viewed myself and arrive at a reading with greater depth and nuance.

Even if he's right, though, does this help us pick commandos? I'm not so sure. Clearly, underneath Sandy Nininger's peaceful façade there was another Nininger capable of great bravery and ferocity, and a T.A.T. of Nininger might have given us a glimpse of that part of who he was. But let's not forget that he volunteered for the front lines: he made a conscious decision to put himself in the heat of the action. What we really need is an understanding of how those two sides of his personality interact in critical situations. When is Sandy Nininger's commitment to peacefulness more, or less, important than some unconscious ferocity?

The other problem with the T.A.T., of course, is that it's a subjective instrument. You could say that my story about the man climbing the rope is evidence that I'm low in achievement or you could say that it shows a strong desire for social mobility. The climber wants to look down—not up—at the King in order to get a sense "of what he could be." You could say that my interpretation that the couple's fighting was staged was evidence of my aversion to strong emotion. Or you could say that it was evidence of my delight in deception and role-playing. This isn't to question Gieser's skill or experience as a diagnostician. The T.A.T. is supposed to do no more than identify themes and problem areas, and I'm sure Gieser would be happy to put me on the couch for a year to explore those themes and see which of his initial hypotheses had any validity. But the reason employers want a magical instrument for measuring personality is that they don't have a year to work through the ambiguities. They need an answer now.

A larger limitation of both Myers-Briggs and the T.A.T. is that they are indirect. Tests of this kind require us first to identify a personality trait that corresponds to the behavior we're interested in, and then to figure out how to measure that trait—but by then we're two steps removed from what we're after. And each of those steps represents an opportunity for error and distortion. Shouldn't we try, instead, to test directly for the behavior we're interested in? This is the idea that lies behind what's known as the Assessment Center, and the leading practitioner of this approach is a company called Development Dimensions International, or D.D.I. Companies trying to evaluate job applicants send them to D.D.I.'s headquarters, outside Pittsburgh, where they spend the day role-playing as business executives. When I

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1ST
MEET THE NEW YORKER COVER ARTIST
ISTVAN BANYAI — 4:30 - 6 P.M.

COCKTAILS WITH THE CARTOONISTS
MATTHEW DIFFEE, MORT GERBERG,
ERIC LEWIS, LEE LORENZ
6 - 8 P.M.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2ND
MEET THE NEW YORKER COVER ARTISTS
DANNY SHANAHAN — 1 - 3 P.M.
PETER DE SEVE — 3 - 5 P.M.
GEORGE BOOTH — 5 - 6 P.M.

COCKTAILS WITH THE CARTOONISTS
MARISA ACOCELLA, DREW DERNAVICH,
J. B. HANDELSMAN, CAROLITA JOHNSON
6 - 8 P.M.

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Please bring your Festival ticket stub for admission, or pick up your invitation at Festival headquarters.

TURNING

contacted D.D.I., I was told that I was going to be Terry Turner, the head of the robotics division of a company called Global Solutions.

I arrived early in the morning, and was led to an office. On the desk was a computer, a phone, and a tape recorder. In the corner of the room was a video camera, and on my desk was an agenda for the day. I had a long telephone conversation with a business partner from France. There were labor difficulties at an overseas plant. A new product—a robot for the home—had run into a series of technical glitches. I answered e-mails. I prepared and recorded a talk for a product-launch meeting. I gave a live interview to a local television reporter. In the afternoon, I met with another senior Global Solutions manager, and presented a strategic plan for the future of the robotics division. It was a long, demanding day at the office, and when I left, a team of D.D.I. specialists combed through copies of my e-mails, the audiotapes of my phone calls and my speech, and the videotapes of my interviews, and analyzed me across four dimensions: interpersonal skills, leadership skills, business-management skills, and personal attributes. A few weeks later, I was given my report. Some of it was positive: I was a quick learner. I had good ideas. I expressed myself well, and—I was relieved to hear—wrote clearly. But, as the assessment of my performance made plain, I was something less than top management material:

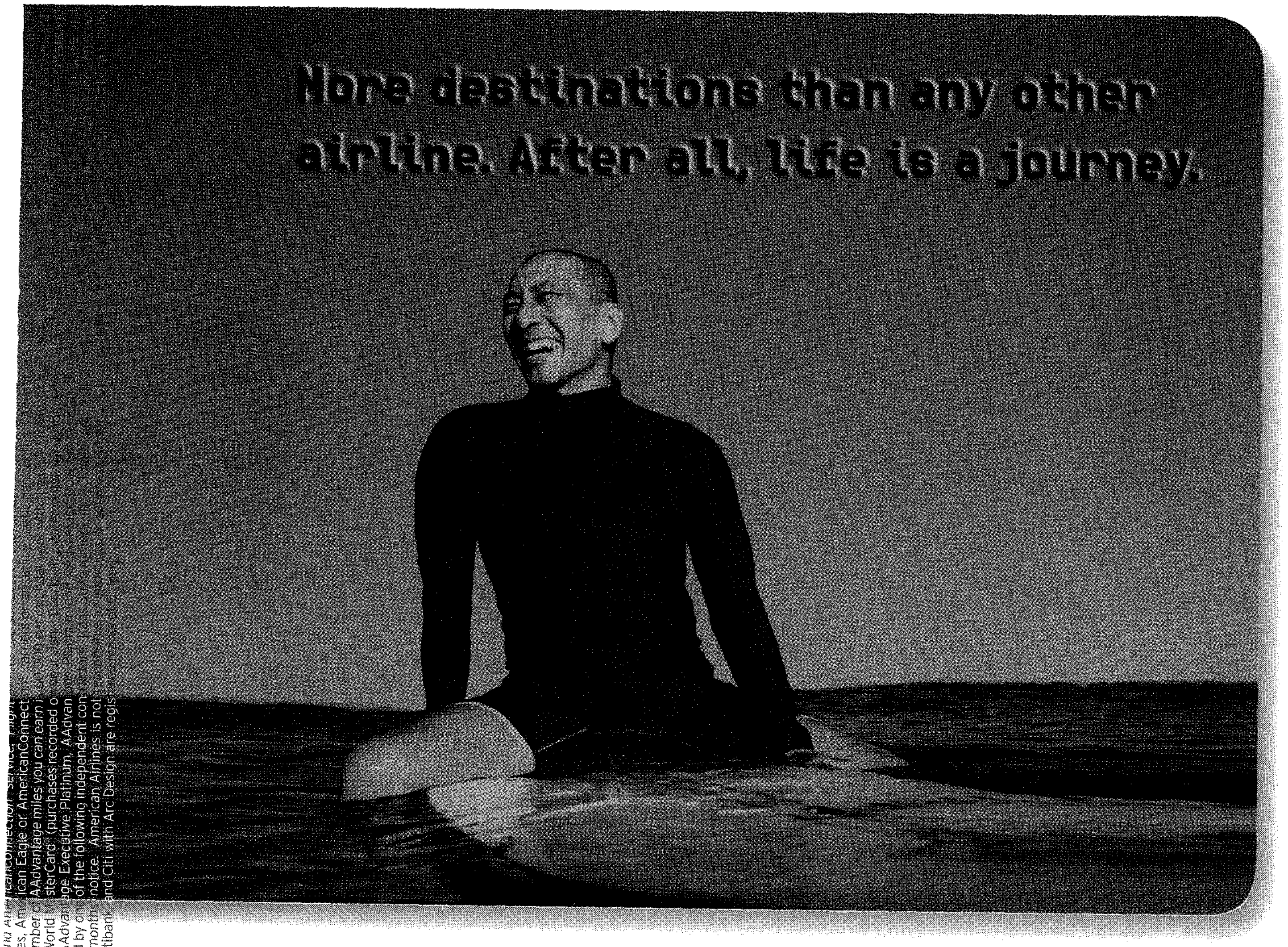
> Although you did a remarkable job addressing matters, you tended to handle issues from a fairly lofty perch, pitching good ideas somewhat unilaterally while lobbing supporting rationale down to the team below. . . . Had you brought your team closer to decisions by vesting them with greater accountability, responsibility and decision-making authority, they would have undoubtedly felt more engaged, satisfied and valued. . . .
>
> In a somewhat similar vein, but on a slightly more interpersonal level, while you seemed to recognize the value of collaboration and building positive working relationships with people, you tended to take a purely businesslike approach to forging partnerships. You spoke of win/win solutions from a business perspective and your rationale for partnering and collaboration seemed to be based solely on business logic. Additionally, at times you did not respond to some of the softer, subtler cues that spoke to people's real frustrations, more personal feelings, or true point of view.

Ouch! Of course, when the D.D.I. analysts said that I did not respond to "some of the softer, subtler cues that spoke to people's real frustrations, more personal feelings, or true point of view," they didn't mean that I was an insensitive person. They meant that I was insensitive in the role of manager. The T.A.T. and M.B.T.I. aimed to make global assessments of the different aspects of my personality. My day as Terry Turner was meant to find out only what I'm like when I'm the head of the robotics division of Global Solutions. That's an important difference. It respects the role of situation and contingency in personality. It sidesteps the difficulty of integrating my unconscious self with my constructed self by looking at the way that my various selves interact in the real world. Most important, it offers the hope that with experience and attention I can construct a more appropriate executive "self." The Assessment Center is probably the best method that employers have for evaluating personality.

But could an Assessment Center help us identify the Sandy Niningers of the world? The center makes a behavioral prediction, and, as solid and specific as that prediction is, people are least predictable at those critical moments when prediction would be most valuable. The answer to the question of whether my Terry Turner would be a good executive is, once again: It depends. It depends on what kind of company Global Solutions is, and on what kind of respect my co-workers have for me, and on how quickly I manage to correct my shortcomings, and on all kinds of other things that cannot be anticipated. The quality of being a good manager is, in the end, as irreducible as the quality of being a good friend. We think that a friend has to be loyal and nice and interesting—and that's certainly a good start. But people whom *we* don't find loyal, nice, or interesting have friends, too, because loyalty, niceness, and interestingness are *emergent* traits. They arise out of the interaction of two people, and all we really mean when we say that someone is interesting or nice is that they are interesting or nice *to us*.

All these difficulties do not mean that we should give up on the task of trying to understand and categorize one another. We could certainly send Sandy Nininger to an Assessment Center, and find out whether, in a make-believe battle, he plays the role of commando with verve and discipline. We could talk to his friends and discover his love of music and theatre. We could find out how he responded to the picture of the man on a rope. We could sit him down and have him do the Myers-Briggs and dutifully note that he is an Introverted, Intuitive, Thinking Judger, and, for good measure, take an extra minute to run him through my own favorite personality inventory and type him as a Canine, Different, Insider Gobbler. We will know all kinds of things about him then. His personnel file will be as thick as a phone book, and we can consult our findings whenever we make decisions about his future. We just have to acknowledge that his file will tell us little about the thing we're most interested in. For that, we have to join him in the jungles of Bataan. ♦

"If you're not doing anything after work, come by the conference room. We're going to be cracking open some beers and throwing some burgers on the copier."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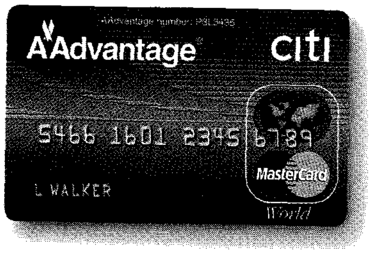

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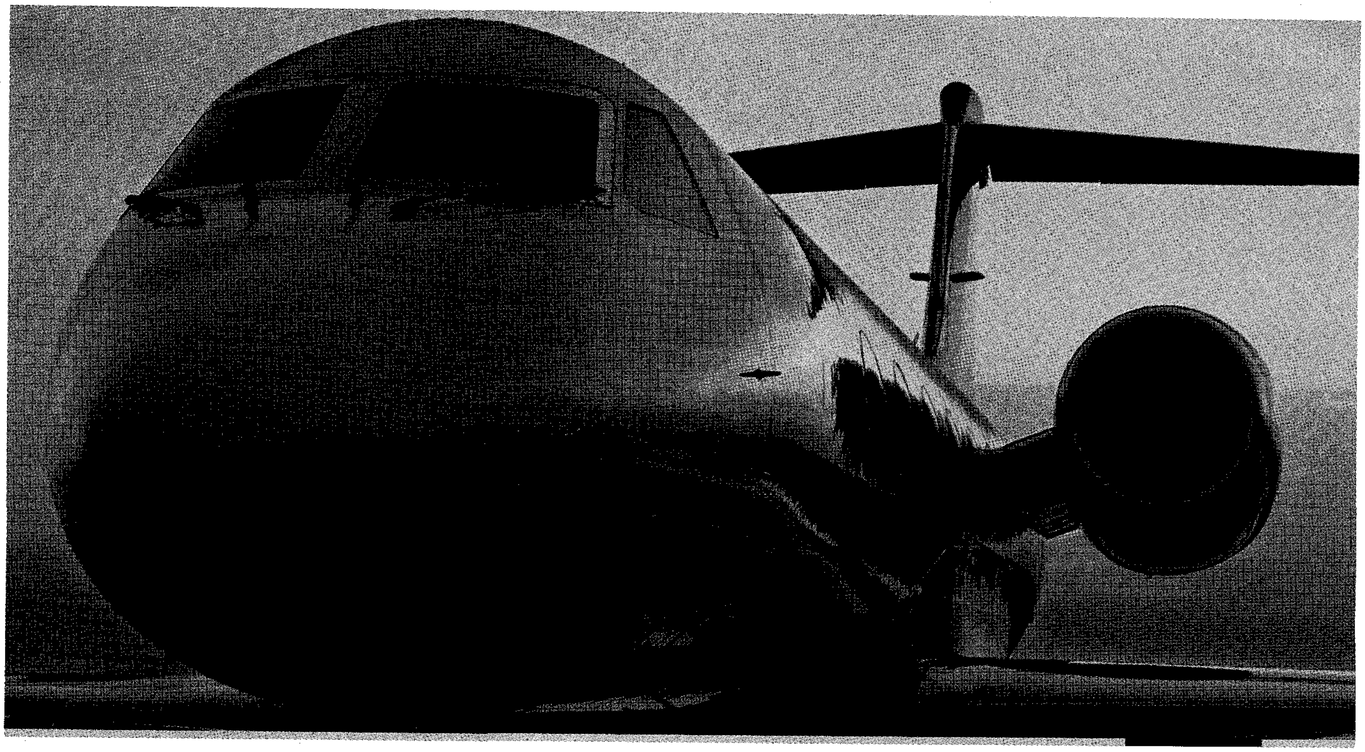


THE POWER OF FREQUENCY

Watch the numbers. Having logged a total of eleven million sky miles and counting . . . *Today* show travel guru **Peter Greenberg** riffs on the loyalty programs he knows so well.

Not long ago, I received a notice from American Airlines that I had exceeded five million frequent-flier miles. That was a wow, or so I thought. And the next time I called an American Airlines agent to make a reservation, I couldn't help but gloat.

"Sir, don't get too excited," she responded.

"But I have five million miles," I said. "I must be near the top. Right?"

"Well, you're up there alright," she laughed. "But you're not even close."

Yes, I had five million miles. Yes, I was already branded an Executive Platinum AAdvantage member. But, there were actually a number of people ahead of me—WAY ahead of me—in the mileage race. One road warrior had accumulated nearly twenty-five million miles! (And I thought I was a mileage-and-points junkie.)

Our addiction to loyalty programs, both airline and hotel, has been growing for more than twenty-three years. Actually . . . longer, in a way. Because before frequent-flier programs, there were Raleigh cigarette coupons and S&H Green Stamps. The idea was similar: Encourage repeat business by rewarding customers for their loyalty. I remember that one of my chores as a child was licking those stamps into the special booklets after my mother returned from the supermarket. And then, months later, taking all those booklets to a redemption center and returning with . . . a Proctor-Silex blender! Today, Green Stamps are probably worth more as collectibles themselves—perhaps even to philatelists.

The new, more powerful currency is the airline and hotel loyalty programs. Nothing to lick, much to savor. And literally thousands of ways to earn—and redeem—miles and points.

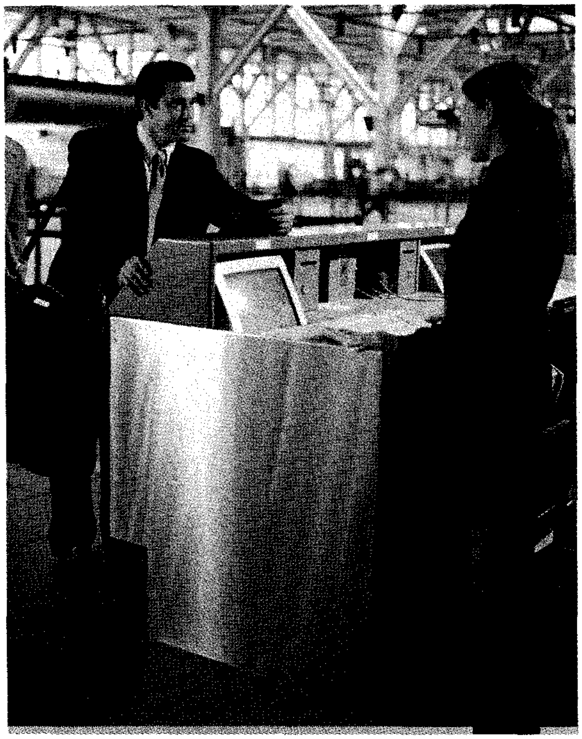
COME FLY WITH ME.

In 1981, American Airlines (AA) introduced AAdvantage, the first frequent-flier program. The goal was to retain AA's most loyal customers by rewarding them for their loyalty. AA compiled a database through its Sabre computer reservations system of 150,000 of its most frequent customers. They were the first members of AAdvantage.

At that time, only a few of American's executives believed the program would be successful—and no one was really prepared for the overwhelming response to the announcement. Almost overnight, enrollment grew to more than 280,000 of their top customers. In a matter of days, the carrier had to convert airport terminal snack areas and hallways to store the boxes of mail received.

As other competing airlines rolled out their frequency programs, it soon became a race to see how many miles could be earned, but more important, how many different *ways* the miles could be earned other than by flying. Refinancing your house earned miles. Dining

TOP: COURTESY OF SENTIENT JET; *LEFT:* PETER GREENBERG IMAGE, COURTESY OF DISCOVERY NETWORK'S TRAVEL CHANNEL; *OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:* © PICTUREQUEST; *RIGHT:* ©CORBIS



out earned miles. Sending flowers earned miles. Soon, as hundreds of mileage "partners" jumped on board the frequency programs, everything short of breathing earned miles.

Perhaps the most powerful mileage earning tool became the affinity credit card. Visa and MasterCards linked directly with an airline's mileage program. The almost inevitable result: People began using credit cards to buy products and services—not just for the products and services, but for the mileage as well. Weddings and bar mitzvahs were charged to the Citi/AAdvantage card. Cars were purchased (a $45,000 car equaled almost two free domestic tickets). Don't forget plastic surgery. And all of it charged on a Citi/AAdvantage Visa or MasterCard.

That was just the beginning. American Airlines even got a phone call from a cardholder who asked, "If I use the card to post my bail, will I get miles?" (Do jailbirds fly?)

And, with all the mileage being accrued, come the interesting ways people redeem those miles. One AAdvantage member used his frequent-flier miles to help educate his young daughter when she was studying geography. He planned an around-the-world excursion, and before he left, bought his daughter a giant world map and map pins. He told her that he would send a postcard from each of the destinations he visited, and that with each delivery she should locate the spot on the map. Following his twenty-eight-cities-in-fifteen-countries tour, the father and daughter retraced his adventures on her map and then he presented her with a unique gift from each destination along with local currency. Needless to say, his daughter ended up being one of the most informed fourth graders in her school.

And the American Airlines flier with the most miles? In the last three years, the twenty-five-million-mile man has simply given tickets away. While shopping at a store in Chicago, he noticed the clerk seemed depressed. She told him she recently had lost her son in an automobile accident, that she was supporting her daughter and had no money to travel. On her behalf, he redeemed mileage for two tickets to Hawaii. On another occasion, he learned of a young priest who had never traveled but had always wanted to visit the Vatican. By the time Mr. Mileage finished talking with an AAdvantage program staffer, he had redeemed enough for five priests to fly to Rome.

"Before long, refinancing your house, sending flowers . . . everything short of breathing earned travel miles."

The lure of mileage has also been known to be an aphrodisiac: One flier was at a car repair shop, paying for his muffler with his affinity credit card. The woman next to him was paying for her repair in cash. He offered to use his credit card in return for her cash. She agreed. They ended up dating—and later marrying. "It was unbelievable," he wrote the airline. "I got the girl and the miles!"

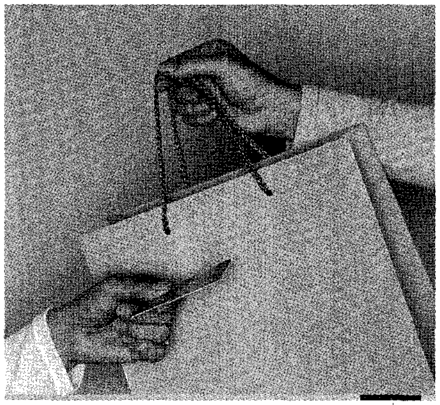
Through the end of the year, the Citi/AAdvantage Platinum Select World MasterCard is offering an enhanced 12,500-bonus-miles incentive for new personal accounts and fifteen thousand bonus miles for new business accounts. New Gold Card holders earn ten thousand bonus miles respectively.

THE WELCOME MAT.

In the beginning, hotels were just partners in the airline programs. But as they discovered the power of frequent-flier programs, and the costs of participating in airline-hosted programs, they naturally considered launching their own: frequent-*stay* programs.

While all of the major hotels today have their own programs, InterContinental Hotels Group was the first, with its Priority Club Rewards. (The group includes InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Staybridge Suites, and Candlewood Suites.) Although the program was originally launched in 1983 as an ad-hoc promotion, it was relaunched a year later as a permanent program with mandatory participation by all hotels in the system. Today, Priority Club Rewards is the largest hotel loyalty program in the world with an enrollment of more than twenty-one million members.

As for the hold these hotel loyalty programs have on members? In a growing number of divorce cases, the pivotal issue determining a final settlement is all about custody . . . of the points. "We often get caught between two feuding spouses," says Steven Sickel, InterContinental Hotels' senior vice president of loyalty marketing, "and we get served with legal papers. They don't care about the car, sofa, the house . . . they want the points. And they get them." (Some hotel programs, like Hilton HHonors, actually address this in the fine print. "It's sort of a preëmptive prenuptial," says Adam Burke, senior vice-president of



FAR LEFT: © PICTUREQUEST; RIGHT: GUEST ROOM AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL MARK HOPKINS SAN FRANCISCO COURTESY OF INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS & RESORTS

Hilton. "We specify that if the marriage ends, each party will receive fifty per cent of the total points accrued during the marriage.")

BUYING POWER.

"We discovered another thing about our frequent guests," says InterContinental's Sickel. "Points are often the new currency of the economy. To the extent that they have additional utility, they've become an underground currency. After staying hundreds of nights at a hotel," he says, "redeeming points to stay even more nights at a hotel wasn't exactly high on guests' lists." So now the Priority Club Rewards program encourages members to use their points to shop for merchandise—everything from concert tickets to sixty-five-inch HDTVs. (More than five hundred items are listed in the rewards catalog, and if it's not there, InterContinental actually provides a personal shopper.)

Through December 17th, Priority Club Rewards members can earn bonus points and miles on third-night stays at any InterContinental property. The nights don't have to be consecutive or even at the same hotel.

Some hotel programs aren't about point accrual or merchandise redemption, but instant gratification. One of the biggest pet peeves of travelers is hotel phone charges. If you're a member of the no-fee Wyndham ByRequest program, then anytime you stay at a North American property your local, 800-number, and domestic long-distance calls are all free in the forty-eight contiguous states.

BYE-BYE, BLACKOUTS.

Over the last couple of years, there's been even better news about some of the larger hotel frequent-stay programs. Hilton ended blackout dates for its diamond-level guests. Ahead of the curve, Starwood, which never observed date restrictions, claims to offer its preferred guests the ability to redeem awards at more luxury and European resorts as well as golf properties than any other hotel program.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

A little-known fact about most frequency programs: As long as you specify the program and your membership number in your will, you can actually deed your points and miles. This means that for those who in their lifetimes may have had trouble redeeming their hard-earned loyalty—some might even argue they nearly died trying—they can now simply pass the burden on to their heirs! ▬

(Emmy Award-winning Peter Greenberg is the travel editor of NBC's *Today* show and the author of "Hotel Secrets from the Travel Detective.")

ON TIME
BOARDI
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ANOTHER KIND OF VALUE

If you're a believer in the bottom-line philosophy that it's not how much it costs, it's how much it's *worth*, then frequency programs pale in comparison to the private jet experience. While it may not reward with miles, the efficiency of the jet charter makes it an attractive option, particularly for businesses.

For example, if seven executives individually booked their round-trip flights from New York to Nantucket online, they might find fares as low as $600. But they would have to connect in Boston, and arrive for their meeting about six hours after they started out.

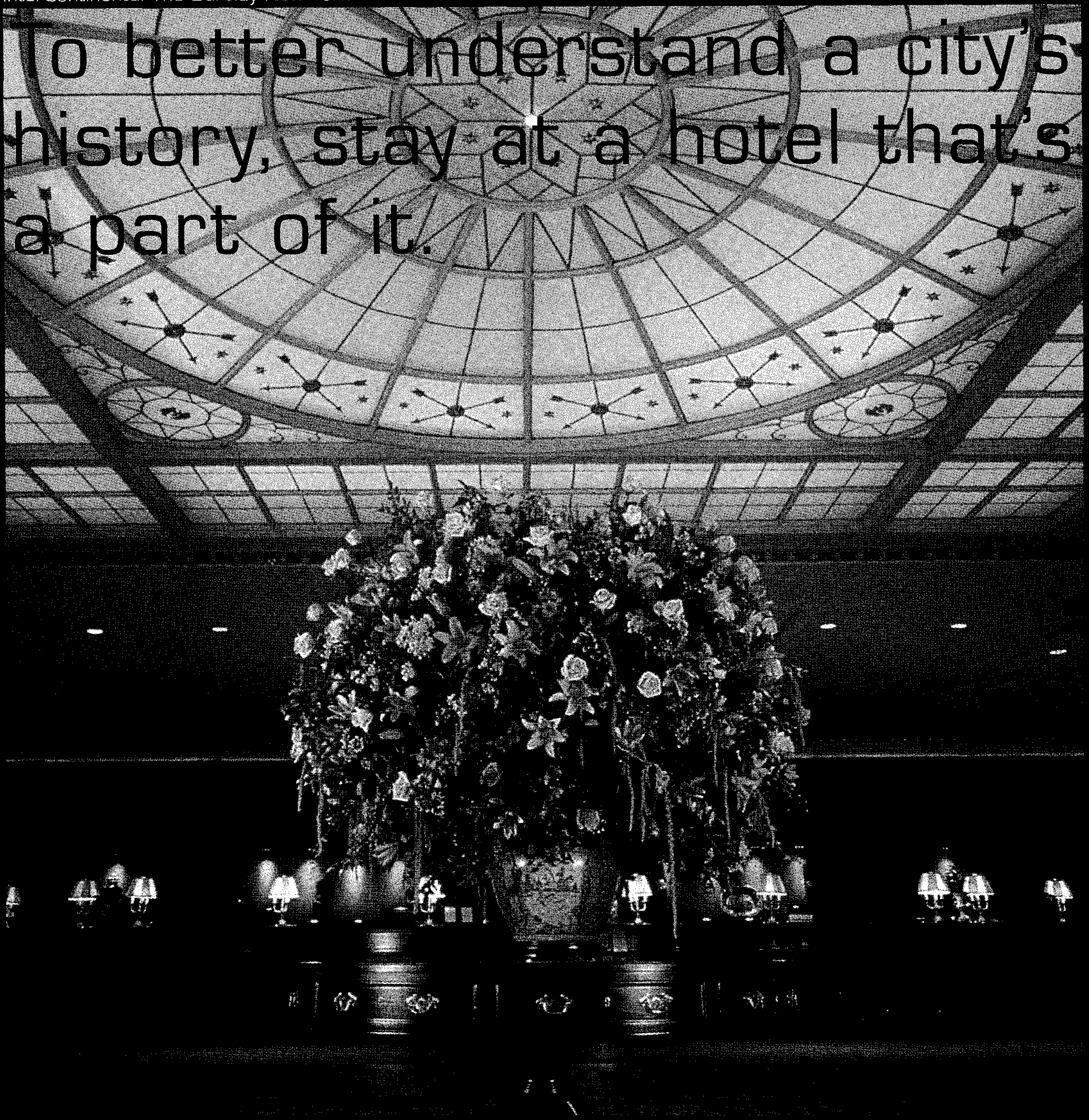
Enter the private jet. "There's been a tremendous change in the way people buy air transportation and in what transportation they choose," says Steven M. Hankin, CEO of Sentient Jet. "There's an ultimate flex in buying private air transportation with no capital risk."

So, New York to Nantucket: If the executives used a Sentient travel card (like a debit card), their real air transportation cost—flying nonstop—would be about $450 each; they'd arrive in forty-five minutes; have an onboard meal; and ground transportation to and from their meeting would be included.

With access to eight hundred jets in the charter market at any given time, Sentient has direct use of everything from a Cessna Citation to a Gulfstream 5. Hourly round-trip rates run from $2,850, for a Lear 45 or a Citation; to $4,100, for a Falcon; and $5,150, for a Challenger or a Gulfstream.

How much is your time worth? Do the math. The real reward program here is in being smart.

InterContinental The Barclay New York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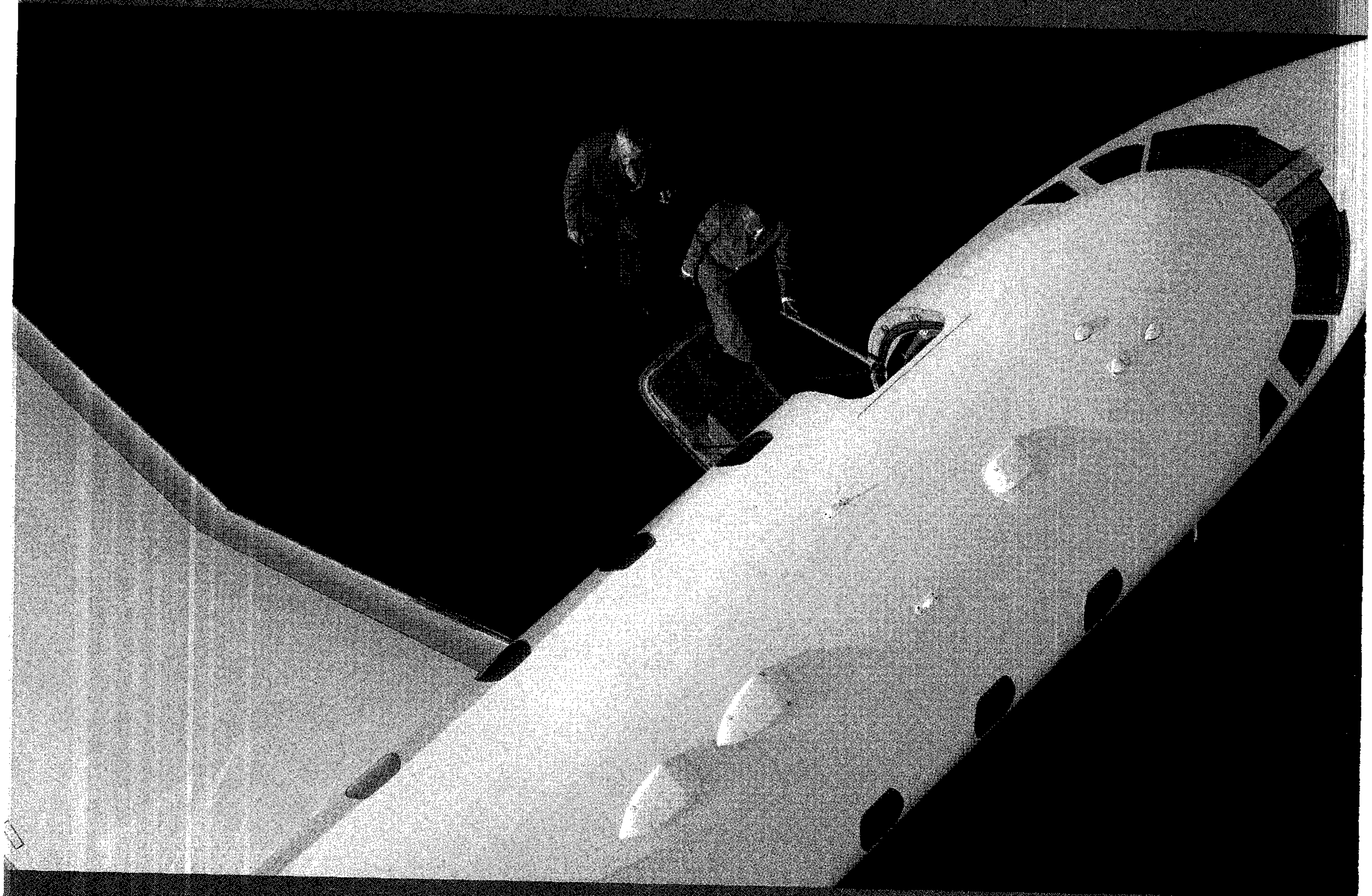

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

THE UNDECIDED

BY PATRICIA MARX

The Los Angeles *Times* poll said one-third of the voters surveyed said they did not know enough about Kerry to decide whether he would be a better president than Bush.
—*The St. Petersburg Times.*

"What do you stand for? Who the hell are you? And what are you passionate about, other than holding office?" asks Frances Montrosso, 58, a house cleaner from Syracuse, N.Y.
—*The Los Angeles Times.*

I know, I know, I know. At the last focus group, I said that I'd make up my mind by the next focus group. But how can anyone choose, given how little we know, even today, about John Kerry? Sure, I've read all his speeches and I've done an on-line background check, looking into his possible unclaimed property, deadbeat parents, and outstanding fines owed to the Department of Motor Vehicles. But is this enough? As a voter committed to making a responsible decision, I want to know the *real* John Kerry.

—We know, for instance, that John Kerry went to Yale, but did he ever meet my friend Penny, who also went there?

—Has John Kerry taken a position on whether he would rather freeze to death or burn to death?

—It's safe to say that everyone is curious about how pants end up on the side of the highway. What light can John Kerry shed on this?

—Do you think John Kerry needs any capers? Because I bought too many, and something tells me they're too foreign for Bush.

—O.K., forget policy. When it comes to John Kerry, we have no information about even the basics. For example, what's his lucky number?

—We have evidence that John Kerry played bass in high school with a band called the Electras. In light of this, does he know what "In-a-gadda-da-vida" means?

—In the upcoming Presidential debates, is John Kerry willing to debate the question "Who's your favorite Stooge—Larry, Moe, or Shemp?"?

—Is John Kerry familiar with all 57 Varieties?

—John Kerry's height (six feet four) is public knowledge, but who knows his depth?

—Why has John Kerry remained silent on the issue of men wearing sandals with socks?

—What does John Kerry think of my proposal that there be a rating for stupid movies, called IQ-13?

—If John Kerry were offered the choice between, on the one hand, being President but looking like Jackie Mason and, on the other hand, not being President and looking like himself, which would he pick?

—Can anyone tell me what John Kerry majored in? If he majored in something impractical, like Celtic and Norse studies, his chances of getting a job would be slim, so I might be more inclined to give him a break and vote for him for President.

—Would John Kerry support an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee monetary compensation to people in focus groups?

—While on the campaign trail, do John Kerry and John Edwards share hair products?

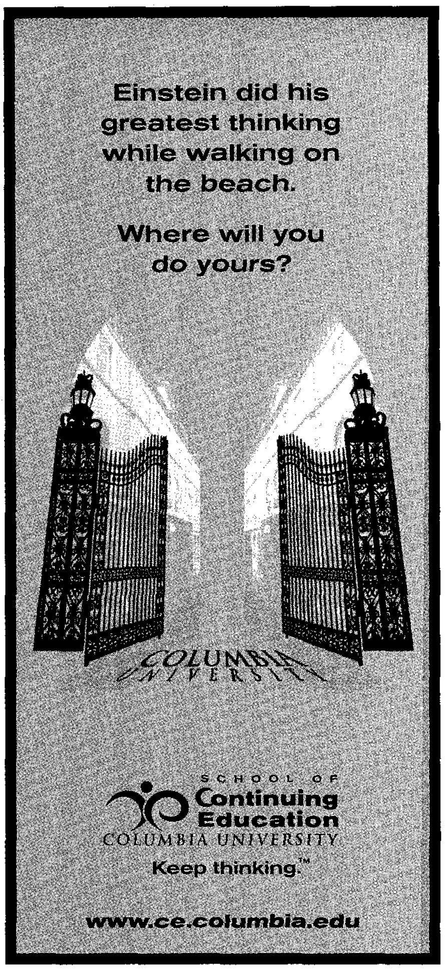
—I know what George Bush thinks about the environment. He's against it. But where does John Kerry stand? I hate eating out-of-doors; does he?

—The Hokey Pokey. Is John Kerry prepared to go on record as saying that "that's what it's all about"?

—Let's say John Kerry were single. How would he feel if my friend Penny asked him out on a date? How about if she did it now?

—Here is something I must be apprised of or I will not be able to pick a candidate in November: Is it faster to go down Broad Street or take the expressway to get to my polling place? I can't decide.

—I could also do with some juicy personal details about the other people in this focus group. ♦



A Rainbow of Poppies

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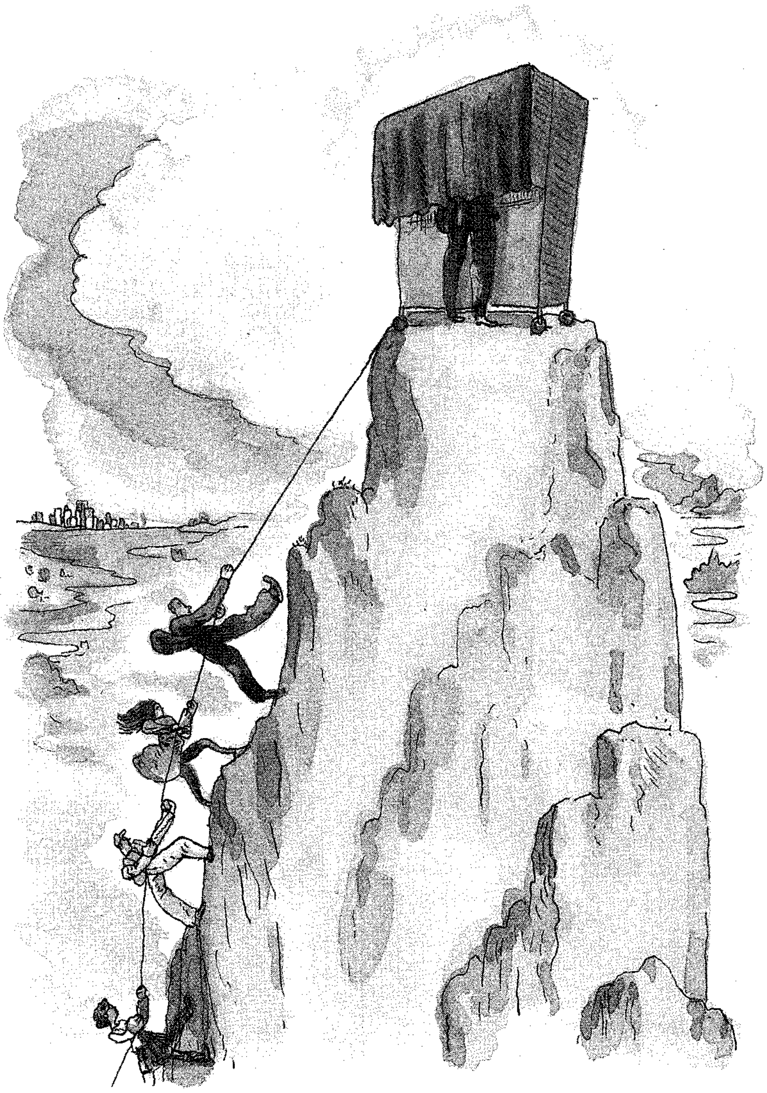
ANNALS OF LAW

POLL POSITION

Is the Justice Department poised to stop voter fraud—or to keep voters from voting?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN



Key provisions of the Voting Rights Act expire in 2007, and its future is up for grabs.

BARRY BLITT

On March 7, 1965, John Lewis, the twenty-five-year-old chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, led about six hundred marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in Selma, Alabama. When they reached the crest of the bridge, the protesters were set upon by helmeted Alabama state troopers and local sheriff's posses, who were swinging clubs and firing tear gas. One of the first troopers on the bridge slammed his nightstick into the left side of Lewis's head, fracturing his skull. "I remember how strangely calm I felt as I thought, 'This is it,'" Lewis wrote years later in his autobiography. "'People are going to die here. I'm going to die here.'" As it turned out, more than fifty marchers were treated for injuries, but no one died.

The attack on the unarmed protesters shocked the country, and President Johnson used the events of what became known as Bloody Sunday to advance an essential part of his civil-rights program. On March 15th, Johnson addressed a Joint Session of Congress to demand that legislators pass, at long last, the Voting Rights Act. Adopting the great anthem of the civil-rights movement, the President concluded his speech with the words ". . . and we shall overcome." Five months later, on August 6th, Johnson signed the bill into law, and invited Lewis to the Oval Office to celebrate the occasion. Toward the end of their meeting, as Lewis recalled, Johnson told him, "Now, John, you've got to go back and get all those folks registered. You've got to go back and get those boys by the balls. Just like a bull gets on top of a cow. You've got to get 'em by the balls and you've got to squeeze, squeeze 'em till they hurt."

Thirty-seven years later, in 2002, Lewis was called on by a federal court to answer a charge that he had violated the Voting Rights Act by discriminating against African-Americans. Lewis was an eight-term member of Congress by then, and a pillar of the Georgia Democratic Party. In the nearly four decades since the act's passage, it had revolutionized the franchise in the South. The literacy tests that were still in effect throughout the region were immediately suspended. Federal registrars replaced local officials who refused to register blacks. And the Attorney General was authorized to eliminate poll taxes wherever they remained. Amended and expanded in 1970, 1975, and 1982, the act also prohibited the kind of racial gerrymandering that allowed white state legislators to draw district lines that prevented African-Americans from winning elective office. It was this provision which Lewis was charged with violating.

During most of that time, the Justice Department's Voting Section, which consists of three dozen or so lawyers who are responsible for enforcing the Voting Rights Act, had insisted that states in the South draw some legislative districts with heavy minority populations, so that African-Americans could be assured of representation. But in the redistricting that followed the 2000 census Lewis and the Democrats, who then controlled Georgia's General Assembly, decided that this process had become counterproductive to black interests and they spread the largely Democratic African-American vote around to more districts. "My congressional district was probably sixty or sixty-five per cent black," Lewis told me recently. "Now it's barely fifty-two per cent. That's fine. I can win, and I'm running unopposed this year." As Lewis testified in the voting-rights trial, Georgia is "not the same state that it was . . . in 1965 or in 1975 or even in 1980 or 1990. We've changed. We have come a great distance. It's not just in Georgia but in the American South. I think people are preparing to lay down the burden of race."

The Justice Department argued that the Georgia plan violated the rights of African-Americans in several of the redrawn districts, a contention that outraged Lewis. "For them to suggest that someone who almost lost his life to get the Voting Rights Act passed wanted to violate it, that was just unbelievable," he told me.

But the government's position wasn't frivolous. The Georgia plan did make it somewhat less certain that blacks would win in several legislative districts. That could be seen as a "retrogression" of African-American rights, which is prohibited by the Voting Rights Act. The fight went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, which last year upheld Georgia's redistricting plan by a margin of just five to four. As it turned out, the five more conservative justices supported the Georgia plan, while the more liberal justices dissented, saying, in effect, that the Voting Rights Act had been designed to help black voters—not to serve the shifting agendas of incumbent politicians, African-American or otherwise. "If one appreciates irony, it is a wonderful case," Daniel Lowenstein, a professor of law at U.C.L.A., says. "Here you have the standard five so-called conservatives on the Court deciding in favor of John Lewis and the Democratic Party of Georgia, and the so-called liberals in favor of the Republicans in Georgia."

The Georgia controversy also raised a question that once seemed unthinkable: Is the Voting Rights Act obsolete? The question has special salience because key provisions of the law expire in 2007, and it's not clear how, or whether, Congress will reauthorize them. "The Voting Rights Act was a transformative statute," Samuel Issacharoff, a professor at Columbia Law School, says. "It's hard to think of any civil-rights law in any walk of life that has been as dramatically effective." In more recent years, the law has gone far beyond such basic issues as eliminating the poll tax; it has, for instance, stopped cities from annexing suburbs to dilute the importance of the minority vote, and the law has made sure that city councils are elected by neighborhood, rather than in at-large citywide races, which had been another way to limit the number of minority candidates who would win seats. As a result of all its changes, according to Issacharoff, "the act created a black political class that is now deeply embedded and politically savvy." The civil-rights establishment—which includes interlocking networks of public-interest organizations, legal academics, and social scientists—is now conducting a sober and uncertain appraisal of the law, but doing so with little momentum and unclear goals.

It is a vacuum that the Justice Department, under John Ashcroft, has moved quickly to fill. As 2007 approaches and liberal activists cautiously explore their options, conservatives—including those in the Justice Department—are using the traditional language of voting rights to recast the issues, invariably in ways that help Republican candidates. The results of this quiet rightward revolution within the Justice Department may be apparent as soon as the November election.

On October 8, 2002, Attorney General Ashcroft stood before an invited audience in the Great Hall of the Justice Department to outline his vision of voting rights, in words that owed much to the rhetoric used by L.B.J. and Lincoln. "The right of citizens to vote and have their vote count is the cornerstone of our democracy—the necessary precondition of government of the people, by the people, and for the people," Ashcroft told the group, which included several veteran civil-rights lawyers.

The Attorney General had come forward to launch the Voting Access and Integrity Initiative, whose name refers to the two main traditions in voting-rights law. Voter-access efforts, which have long been associated with Democrats, seek to remove barriers that discourage poor and minority voters; the Voting Rights Act itself is the paradigmatic

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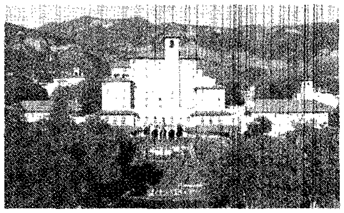

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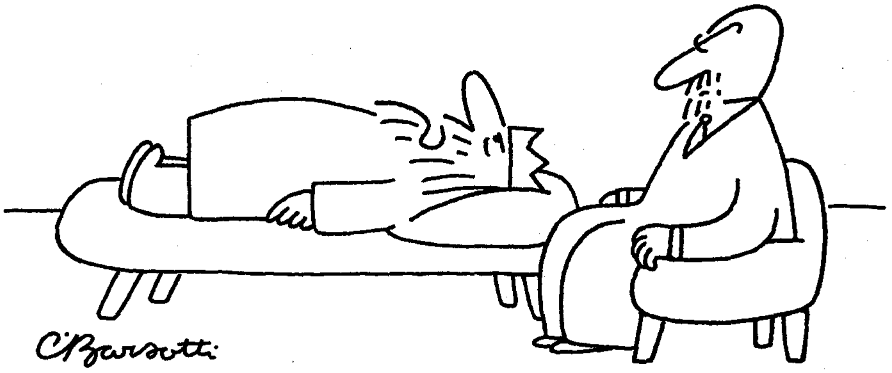

"My father—who the hell do you think named me Edward the Lesser?"

• •

voter-access policy. The voting-integrity movement, which has traditionally been favored by Republicans, targets fraud in the voting process, from voter registration to voting and ballot counting. Despite the title, Ashcroft's proposal favored the "integrity" side of the ledger, mainly by assigning a federal prosecutor to watch for election crimes in each judicial district. These lawyers, Ashcroft said, would "deter and detect discrimination, prevent electoral corruption, and bring violators to justice."

Federal law gives the Justice Department the flexibility to focus on either voter access or voting integrity under the broad heading of voting rights, but such shifts of emphasis may have a profound impact on how votes are cast and counted. In the abstract, no one questions the goal of eliminating voting fraud, but the idea of involving federal prosecutors in election supervision troubles many civil-rights advocates, because few assistant United States attorneys have much familiarity with the laws protecting voter access. That has traditionally been the province of the lawyers in the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division, whose role is defined by the Voting Rights Act. In a subtle way, the Ashcroft initiative nudged some of these career civil-rights lawyers toward the sidelines.

Addressing the real but uncertain dimensions of voter fraud means risking potentially greater harm to legitimate voters. "There is no doubt that there has been fraud over the years—people voting twice, immigrants voting, unregistered people voting—but no one knows how bad the problem is," Lowenstein says. "It is a very hard subject for an academic or anyone else to study, because by definition it takes place under the table." And, despite its neutral-sounding name, "voting integrity" has had an incendiary history. "It's one of those great euphemisms," Pamela S. Karlan, a professor at Stanford Law School, says. "By and large, it's been targeted at minority voters." During the Senate hearings on William Rehnquist's nomination as Chief Justice, in 1986, a number of witnesses testified that in the early nineteen-sixties Rehnquist, then a lawyer in private practice and a Republican political activist, had harassed black and Latino voters at Arizona polling places, demanding to know if they were "qualified to vote." (Rehnquist denied doing so.) In the 1981 governor's race in New Jersey, the Republican Party hired armed off-duty police officers to work in a self-described National Ballot Security Task Force, which posted signs at polling places in minority neighborhoods reading, "Warning, This Area Is Being Patrolled by the National Ballot Security Task Force. It Is a Crime to Falsify a Ballot or to Violate Election Laws."

As recently as last year's gubernatorial election in Kentucky, Republicans placed "challengers," who may query a voter's eligibility, in polling places in Louisville's predominantly black neighborhoods, an act that many Democrats regarded as an attempt at racial intimidation. An emphasis on voting integrity, whatever the motivations behind it, often helps Republicans at the polls.

The person in over-all charge of the Administration's voting-rights portfolio is R. Alexander Acosta, the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. On May 4th, Acosta invited representatives of many leading traditional civil-rights organizations, such as the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, to the seventh-floor conference room in the Justice Department Building to talk about his plans for the upcoming election. Acosta, who is a thirty-five-year-old Cuban-American from Miami, served first as a top political appointee in the Civil Rights Division, where he was known for his close attention to the rights of Spanish-speaking minorities. After the 2000 census, Acosta asked the Census Bureau to make data available before the 2002 elections, hoping to locate Spanish-speaking communities and provide bilingual ballots. "Alex was very helpful in making sure that the bureau got the data on a timely basis, so jurisdictions could make all aspects of voting accessible," says Marisa Demeo, who was then a lawyer with the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, which gave Acosta its 2003 Excellence in Government Service Award.

The May 4th meeting addressed issues that related more to the traditional voting-rights concerns of African-Americans than to those of Latinos. Acosta opened the session with an unusual request: that no one take notes on what he had to say. The meeting was a courtesy, he said, but he didn't want to have his exact words thrown back at him later. (Acosta has declined repeated requests to be interviewed.) According to several people present at the meeting, Acosta described how Voting Section lawyers will monitor ballot access at the polls while federal prosecutors will be on call to respond to allegations of fraud. He informed the group that ninety-three federal prosecutors would travel to Washington in July for a two-day training session, and that they would all be on duty on Election Day. Acosta said that the changes were being made in good faith and asked those assembled to keep an open mind.

The idea of placing prosecutors on call on Election Day created misgivings both inside and outside the Voting Section. "A lot of assistant U.S. attorneys are going to be more interested in voting integrity than in voter protection," Jon

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Greenbaum, a lawyer who recently left the Voting Section, after nearly seven years, to join the progressive Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, told me. "How many people are scared off from voting because you ask them a question at a polling place? There is no way to know." As another civil-rights lawyer puts it, "Voting is kind of an irrational act anyway. It's easy to discourage people from doing it." Justice officials insist that they don't want to keep anyone from legitimately voting. "I understand that, historically, intimidation is something that could be used as a method to get people not to vote," Luis Reyes, who is counsellor to Acosta, says. "But intimidation is antithetical to our mission with this initiative."

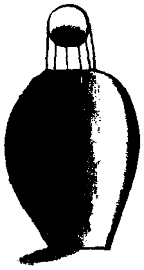
By most accounts, Ashcroft's Access and Integrity Initiative came too late to make much difference in the 2002 elections, which followed his announcement by about a month. Civil-rights advocates note, however, that the only major fraud investigation that came out of that election concerned Native Americans in South Dakota, who generally vote overwhelmingly for Democrats.

The spectre of the vote-counting controversy in Florida after the 2000 election still haunts most discussions of voting-rights law, and gives everything about voting rights a partisan slant. This is especially true of the government's most direct response to the 2000 election—the legislation that became known as the Help America Vote Act, or HAVA, which Congress passed in 2002 and which is only now having widespread practical effect. Though HAVA is often described as Congress's answer to the Florida imbroglio, some of its original inspiration, according to Kit Bond, a Missouri Republican who was one of its principal sponsors in the Senate, was a voting controversy in Missouri that same year. "I don't believe we had anywhere near an honest election in St. Louis in 2000," Bond told me. "They kept the polls open late and let all kinds of people vote who shouldn't have—people who registered from vacant lots, dead people on the rolls, even a springer spaniel. After what I saw, I said we are going to make it easier to vote but harder to cheat." (On November 7, 2000, Democrats in St. Louis persuaded a local judge to extend voting hours, arguing that high voter turnout had caused lines to back up at polling places; Republicans charged that the maneuver was an illegal attempt to gain partisan advantage.)

At the time HAVA was passed, it was generally portrayed as a compromise between voter access and voting integrity: Democrats got more money for the states to invest in modern voting technology, and Republicans won new and tighter restrictions on fraud. So far, though, implementation of the law seems to have favored Republicans. HAVA authorized the government to spend up to $3.9 billion over three years on new registration systems and voting machines, but states have received less than half of the original amount. The law requires each state to create a computerized list of all registered voters, but forty states have been granted waivers of this obligation until 2006. The anti-fraud provisions, however, are expected to take effect in time for the November elections. This is what Bond intended. "There is nothing like the fear of jail time to get people to stop messing with elections," he told me. HAVA also requires states to allow people who claim they are wrongly denied the right to vote at the polls the chance to cast "provisional" ballots. The recent history of provisional ballots is not promising, though. For example, in Chicago during this year's primary, 5,498 of 5,914 provisional ballots were ultimately disqualified. The question of how and whether provisional votes will be counted in 2004 is unsettled in many states and could delay the posting of results on Election Night.

One of the more controversial parts of the new law requires, in most circumstances, voters who have registered by mail to provide their driver's license or Social Security numbers, and to produce an official photo I.D. at the polls, or a utility bill. Hans A. von Spakovsky, a counsel to Acosta and the main Justice Department interpreter of HAVA, wrote to Judith A. Armold, an assistant attorney general in Maryland, that the Justice Department believed states must "verify" the Social Security numbers that people submit on their registration forms. For most states, this requirement won't apply until 2006, but it may be a major hurdle for both the states and newly registered voters. "What D.O.J. is saying is clearly contrary to the statute in our view," Arnold says.

Von Spakovsky, a longtime activist in the voting-integrity cause, has emerged as the Administration's chief operative on voting rights. Before going to Washington, he was a lawyer in private practice and a Republican appointee to the Fulton County Registration and Election Board, which runs elections in Atlanta. He belonged to the Federalist Society, a prominent organization of conservative lawyers, and had also joined the board of advisers of a lesser-known group called the Voting Integrity Project.



The V.I.P. was founded by Deborah Phillips, a former county official of the Virginia Republican Party, as an organization devoted principally to fighting voting fraud and promoting voter education. In 1997, von Spakovsky wrote an article for the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, a conservative research group, that called for an aggressive campaign to "purge" the election rolls of felons. Within months of that article's publication, the V.I.P. helped put von Spakovsky's idea into action. Phillips met with the company that designed the process for the removal of alleged felons from the voting rolls in Florida, a process that led, notoriously, to the mistaken disenfranchisement of thousands of voters, most of them Democratic, before the 2000 election. (This year, Florida again tried to purge its voting rolls of felons, but the method was found to be so riddled with errors that it had to be abandoned.) During the thirty-six-day recount in Florida, von Spakovsky worked there as a volunteer for the Bush campaign. After the Inauguration, he was hired as an attorney in the Voting Section and was soon promoted to be counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, in what is known as the "front office" of the Civil Rights Division. In that position, von Spakovsky, who is forty-five years old, has become an important voice in the Voting Section. (Von Spakovsky, citing Justice Department policy, has also declined repeated requests to be interviewed.)

In a recent speech at Georgetown University, von Spakovsky suggested that voting integrity will remain a focus for the Justice Department, and that voter access might best be left to volunteers. "Frankly, the best thing that can happen is when both parties and candidates have observers in every single polling place, wherever the votes are collected and tabulated, because that helps make sure that nothing happens that shouldn't happen, that the votes are counted properly, and that there is transparency to maintain public confidence in elections," he said. "Not enough people volunteer to be poll-watchers. They ought to do that so that there are poll-watchers everywhere in the country throughout the whole election process." The Bush-Cheney campaign has announced plans to place lawyers on call for as many as thirty thousand precincts on Election Day, to monitor for vote fraud. Democratic lawyers also plan to be out in force.

Since Ashcroft took office, traditional enforcement of the Voting Rights Act has declined. The Voting Section has all but stopped filing lawsuits against communities alleged to have engaged in discrimination against minority voters. "D.O.J. is a very bureaucratic institution," Jon Greenbaum, the former Voting Section lawyer, said, "and it's hard to get cases filed under any Administration, but we were filing cases in the Clinton years." As even civil-rights advocates acknowledge, there are fewer vote-discrimination cases to bring than there have been in the past. The Justice Department's Web site says that "several lawsuits of this nature are filed every year," but since Bush was sworn in the Voting Section has filed just one contested racial vote-discrimination case, in rural Colorado, which it lost. Justice Department sources say the Voting Section is also considering whether to sue a Mississippi locality that has an African-American majority. Such a lawsuit would be the first use of a key section of the Voting Rights Act to protect the rights of white voters.

The main business of the Voting Section is still passing judgment on legislative redistricting in areas that have a history of discrimination. Under Ashcroft, its actions have consistently favored Republicans—for instance, in Georgia, where the department chal-

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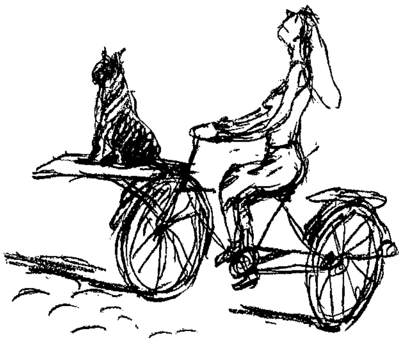
lenged the Democrats' gerrymander, and in Mississippi, where the Voting Section stalled the redistricting process for so long that a pro-Republican redistricting plan went into effect by default. The Voting Section's role in the controversial redistricting of Texas was more direct and, ultimately, more significant. After the 2000 census, Texas, like most states, put through a new redistricting plan. Then, after the midterm elections, Tom DeLay, the House Majority Leader, who is from Houston, engineered passage of a revised congressional redistricting plan through the state legislature, which may mean a shift of as many as seven seats from the Democrats to the Republicans. It was unprecedented for a state to make a second redistricting plan after a post-census plan had been adopted. When the DeLay plan was submitted to the Justice Department for approval, career officials in the Voting Section produced an internal legal opinion of seventy-three pages, with seventeen hundred and fifty pages of supporting documents, arguing that the plan should be rejected as a retrogression of minority rights. However, according to people familiar with the deliberations, the political staff of the Voting Section exercised its right to overrule that decision and approved the DeLay plan, which is now in effect for the 2004 elections.

Far from Washington, and even farther from the reigning ideology there, some civil-rights advocates have begun to sketch the beginnings of an alternative scenario for voting rights. At a conference at Harvard Law School on May 10th, under the direction of Christopher Edley, who is also a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, about forty litigators, law professors, and social scientists started debating key moves for the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2007.

"Mostly, we concentrated on trying to identify the right questions," Edley, who recently became the dean of Boalt Hall, the law school of the University of California at Berkeley, said. "You can't be utopian. This was not an exercise in how to reinvent democracy. But we were trying to figure out what could one plausibly argue for." Decades removed from the struggles of the nineteen-sixties, Edley and his colleagues faced a complex set of issues. How should the government draw multiethnic districts, where Hispanics or Asians lay claim to seats held by whites or even by African-Americans? "Who speaks for the African-American community?" Edley asked. "Is it the African-American incumbents, or do we discount their testimony, because of their self-interest?"

For Edley and his colleagues, the lessons of the Florida recount suggest possible reforms of the Voting Rights Act. Some of the more lurid allegations of racial discrimination in Florida during the 2000 election, like racial profiling at roadblocks near polling places in black neighborhoods, were never proved, but there is little doubt that African-Americans faced disproportionate difficulties at the polls. In Jacksonville, for example, apparently because of a confusing ballot design, more than twenty-five thousand votes—nine per cent of all ballots cast—were rendered invalid. Nearly nine thousand of these invalid votes were concentrated in African-American precincts. Gadsden County had the highest percentage of black voters in the state and the highest rate of disqualified ballots, with one in eight votes not counted. In its current form, the Voting Rights Act offers no specific redress for these problems. Perhaps, Edley suggested, the law should be expanded to include such things as the quality of voting machines. "In Florida, we saw tremendous geographic disparities in spoilage rates for ballots," Edley said. "We don't accept those kinds of disparities when it comes to the standards for drinking water. Why do we accept them when it comes to the quality of the voting process?" Still, Edley recognizes that control of the Justice Department may matter as much as the precise words of the laws on the books. "Obviously, the effectiveness of it is going to be greatly diminished if enforcement takes on a pronounced ideological tilt," he says.



Under Ashcroft, the Justice Department has also changed its method of hiring lawyers, who are supposed to be apolitical, and often go on to spend their careers working for the government. The department, which employs close to four thousand attorneys, hires junior-level lawyers through a program known as the Attorney General's Honors Program, which brings in about a hundred and fifty new lawyers each year. In the past, the program was run by mid-level career officials, who were known for their political independence. Since 2002, the Honors Program has been run by political appointees. "It's called the Attorney General's Honors Program, and when Attorney General Ashcroft signed the first batch of appointments he said, 'I'm the Attorney General. How come I don't know anything about this?' " Mark Corallo, Ashcroft's spokesman, says. "He said he wanted the top people in the department getting involved. He said he wanted greater outreach, different law schools approached, reaching out not just for racial minorities but for economic minorities as well." Corallo dismisses complaints about the changes as coming from malcontents. "A bunch of mid-level people here had their boondoggle taken away from them, going on these recruiting trips for weeks at a time, wining and dining at great hotels on the government's dime," he said.

Lawyers inside and outside the department say that the change in the Honors Program has already had an effect, especially in politically sensitive places like the Voting Section. "The front office disbanded the hiring committee and took over all hiring," one lawyer who recently left the Voting Section told me. "That was a huge deal. Under previous Republican Administrations, that hadn't happened. They even took it over for summer volunteer clerks." Thanks to these changes, some in the department believe, it's only a matter of time before tensions in the Voting Section disappear. As a current employee puts it, "Soon, there won't be any difference between the career people and the political people. The front office is replicating itself. Everyone here will be on the same page." ♦

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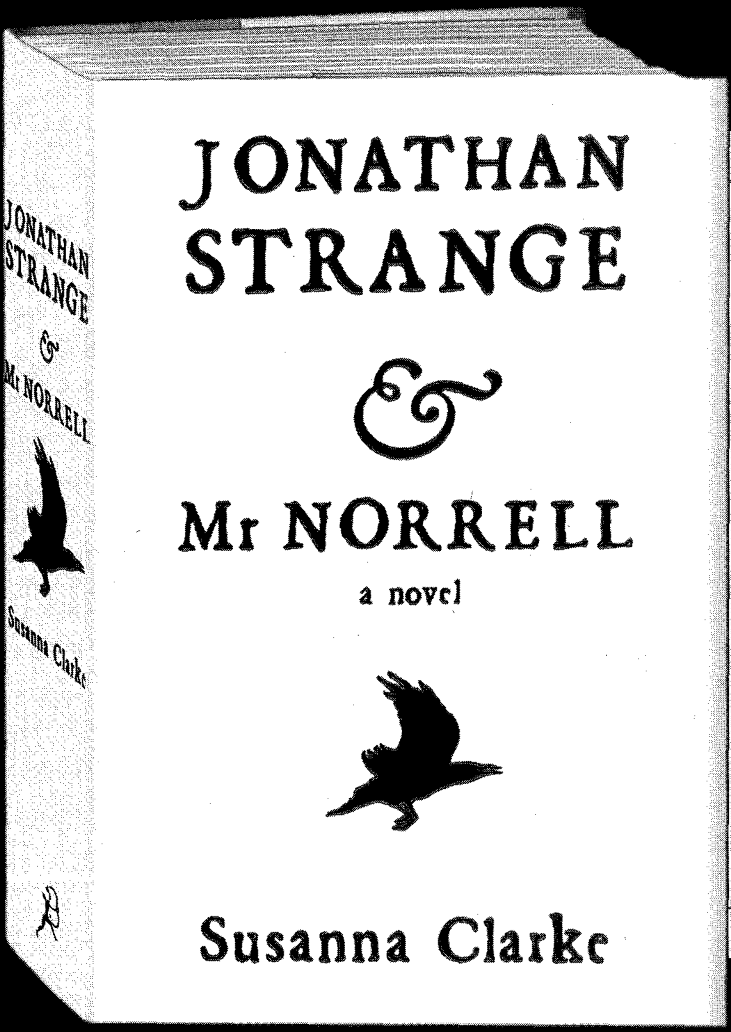

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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

KERRY'S BRAIN

Bob Shrum is one of the biggest names in the campaign business—but is he prepared to take on Bush?

BY KEN AULETTA

Robert Shrum, a senior adviser to John Kerry, is probably the Democratic Party's most celebrated speechwriter. But Shrum, who has made speechwriting a specialty, dislikes being described by what he does best. "I don't want to be a speechwriter," he insists, and he is eager to make clear that he has broader strategic responsibilities in the Kerry Presidential campaign. According to Kerry's former campaign manager, Jim Jordan, "Anything having to do with words and message, Bob had the last word."

Shrum, who is sixty-one, is not widely known beyond the small and insular world of politicians, consultants, and the journalists who cover them, but in that world he is considered a major force. At first glance, he seems to be well cast for the 2004 contest against George W. Bush. He has helped to shape the campaigns of seven Presidential candidates and of nearly one-third of the Democratic members of the United States Senate. The political- and media-consulting firm of Shrum Devine Donilon, at which Shrum is the most senior of three partners, has also worked overseas—for Prime Minister Tony Blair, of Britain, Ehud Barak, of Israel, and the Presidents of Ireland, Colombia, and Bolivia. Of the ten Democrats who ran for the White House this year, Shrum Devine Donilon worked at various times for four—Kerry, John Edwards, Richard Gephardt, and Joe Lieberman. After a serious flirtation with Edwards, whom Shrum had helped in his winning Senate race, in 1998, Shrum signed on with Kerry in early 2003.

Consultants like Shrum—and like Karl Rove, who oversees the Bush-Cheney campaign—play an increasingly singular role in modern politics. Much the way that agents in Hollywood perform what used to be the task of the major studios (bringing together directors, writers, and stars), consultants now have the function once reserved for the political parties. They vet a candidate for the public and the press and help to shape a candidate's message. They also provide friendship—if not psychotherapy. "Shrum is family," Senator Bill Nelson, of Florida, said. "I cry and he cries for me."

But empathy, speechwriting, and an aptitude for political combat—prepping a candidate for a debate, touching the right tactical bases—are not necessarily the talents of a successful political strategist. Within the Kerry organization, there is no real counterpart to Rove, whose background in direct mail gives him an advantage in a contest where the turnout in every county in a contested state may be crucial, and whose control of a campaign's message is close to absolute. The Kerry organization, by contrast, is more segmented. Mary Beth Cahill, the Kerry campaign manager, has been focussing on operations, and Shrum has been the de-facto chief strategist. Last winter, he was on the road full time with Kerry. "Bob likes to control access to the candidate," Harold Ickes, a former White House deputy chief of staff, said. "And, if you control the speeches and the ads and the message, you control a big part of the campaign."

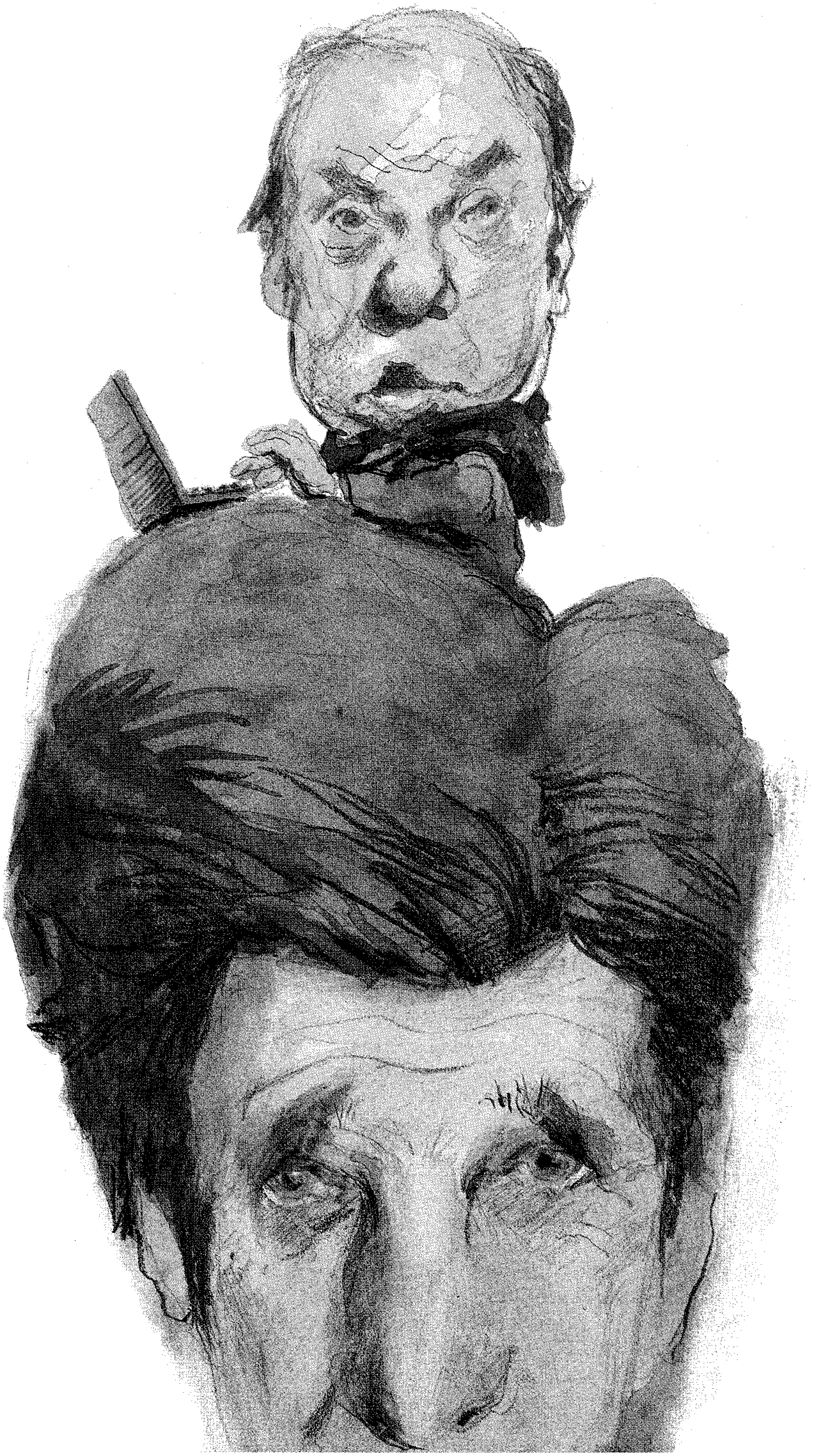
As national security and terrorism have come to dominate the public debate—an agenda that Rove and Bush have helped to frame—Kerry supporters have worried that Shrum's populism, an intense focus on domestic issues like jobs and health care, may prove to be a fatal weakness. Shrum, after all, has never worked for a successful Presidential candidate—from George McGovern, in 1972, to Al Gore, in 2000. The two Democrats to win the White House in the forty years since Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater—Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton—were centrist candidates; they managed to woo back white male voters who had deserted the Party. Carter, who was elected in a post-Watergate atmosphere, called himself a moderate Democrat; Clinton, who was running against a weakened George H. W. Bush and an erratic third-party candidate, Ross Perot, defined himself as a New Democrat. Shrum was absent from both races. And his Senate races have been largely confined to so-called "blue" states, which voted Democratic in 2000. "No one is better than Bob at writing a speech that sings," John Podesta, Clinton's former chief of staff, told me, "but that is a very different thing from driving a simple, clear, and coherent message about where Kerry would take the country."

Many Democrats are mystified by the direction of the Kerry campaign. "If you look at the last several months," Jimmy Carter's former strategist, Hamilton Jordan, said in early September, "and you look at the Abu Ghraib scandal, and the war in Iraq not going well, and a sluggish economy, and job losses in swing states like Michigan and Ohio—you'd say Kerry should be ten points ahead now. . . . The fact that we're talking about Vietnam, not Iraq, is an indication" of Kerry's failure to present the campaign on his terms.

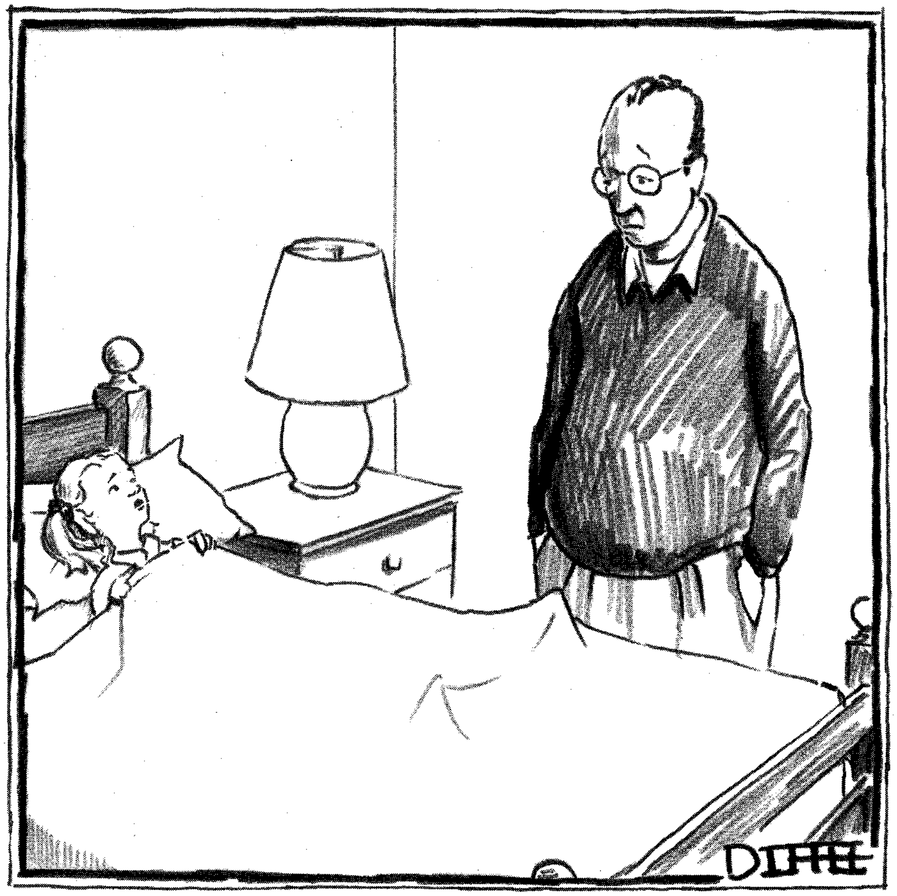
The Presidential campaign is far from over, and Democrats have an almost genetic predisposition to panic. But, if there was a turning point this summer, it came in August, after the Democratic National Convention. In his acceptance speech, Kerry had defined himself by his experience in the Vietnam War. "I know what kids go through when they are carrying an M16 in a dangerous place and they can't tell friend from foe," he said, and six days later was attacked in ads about his wartime service by a group calling itself Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

Shrum had told me in June that he thought a more sober electorate in a post-9/11 world was impatient with negative attacks. At first, the Kerry campaign, thinking that the charges were so blatantly false that they would disappear, said little. "I believe the campaign responded in a

DAVID LEVINE



Shrum has shown that he can fight as nastily as anyone, which has made the mild-mannered Kerry campaign all the more puzzling.



"Mommy usually reads me a story, then slips me a twenty."

• •

timely fashion to the Swift Boat attacks," Shrum told me in August, after the campaign had waited more than two weeks to aggressively rebut the charges. "And I believe the public believes that Bush is behind the attacks and that they are not true." But, to judge from recent polls, the public reacted to the smear tactic; a war thirty years old had become an issue. Last week, I asked Shrum why the Kerry campaign wasn't ready for attacks, given the history of campaigns by Rove and by Lee Atwater, who ran George H. W. Bush's 1988 campaign against Michael Dukakis. "I think we did see the negatives coming," Shrum said. "I think we were fully prepared. My thought is that personal stuff like the Swift Boat stuff doesn't work, but a negative campaign based on issues that people think are relevant does work." Shrum went on to say that at the time "not one person in the Democratic Party called to say we should respond sooner. And, by the way, no one said, 'Don't talk about Vietnam.'"

Even when Kerry did respond—for instance, when Bush challenged him to say how he would have voted on the Iraq war "knowing what he knows now"—he tended to ad-lib answers that, in the context of a modern, high-tech campaign, sounded muddled. ("Yes, I would have voted for the authority. I believe it was the right authority for a President to have," he said on August 9th, adding that Bush and his advisers badly mishandled the war.) A senior Kerry adviser, who insisted on anonymity, told me that "the campaign has a clear message, but the candidate sometimes doesn't," though perhaps the real problem is that the candidate cannot always deliver that message effectively. In his acceptance speech, Kerry several times mentioned Iraq but in an almost oblique way, as when he said, "We need a President who has the credibility to bring our allies to our side and share the burden, reduce the cost to American taxpayers, and reduce the risk to American soldiers." On the stump, when he departs from the written text, Kerry meanders; he often seems unaware of having to make a connection with an audience.

Inevitably, there have been personnel changes in the campaign. By May, it was clear that Kerry's communications director, Stephanie Cutter, was overextended, and reporters said that dealing with the Kerry press office was like calling the D.M.V. In June, travelling reporters complained to Kerry, and he called Michael McCurry, who had been Clinton's press secretary, and asked him to oversee press relations. McCurry declined, but he offered to help, and that month Debra DeShong, who was the communications director at the Democratic National Committee, began to report to Cutter. Complaints persisted, particularly on the road, and in late August Joe Lockhart, who succeeded McCurry in the Clinton White House, joined the campaign to travel with Kerry and work with the press.

Recently, a number of former Clinton aides—among them James Carville, who was the Clinton campaign's chief strategist in 1992, and Stanley Greenberg, who was Clinton's pollster that year—began helping out, many of them informally. One Kerry campaign staffer described the reaction to this infusion as mixed, but said, "People feel their arrival coincided with Kerry going much more clearly on the attack. I think that's inspiring people." Already in place were some of Senator Edward Kennedy's former aides, including Cahill, who had been Kennedy's chief of staff, and Cutter, who had been his press secretary. John Sasso, who ran the Dukakis campaign in 1988 and whom Kerry, last spring, named as his general-election manager on the Democratic National Committee, became in effect a new senior adviser, travelling full time with Kerry. (Michael Whouley, who was an immense help to Kerry in the Iowa caucuses, will replace Sasso at the D.N.C.) Clinton himself, before undergoing heart-bypass surgery, spoke at length with Kerry from his hospital bed. The candidate also relies on Shrum's two partners, Mike Donilon and Tad Devine, as well as on fifteen or so advisers who participate in a 7:30 A.M. daily-strategy conference call presided over by Cahill. This polyphony of advice, one former Kerry aide said, threatens to divide the Kerry campaign "into postwar Berlin with four zones." Inevitably, Kerry will now spend less time listening to any single adviser, including Shrum. "I believe the complaint earlier in the campaign was that I was doing strategy all alone, and it was never true," Shrum said. "Adding strengths is a good thing, not a bad thing."

In this way, though, the Kerry campaign at times has looked like a reverse image of the Bush campaign, which is disciplined and organized, and has kept its internal disputes well hidden. As the Democratic strategist Paul Begala puts it, Karl Rove has tried to present "Bush as strong and decisive, and Kerry as weak and a waffler"—a constant theme during the Republican Convention. But the campaign has become increasingly angry. Minutes after Bush finished his acceptance speech in New York, Kerry, in Ohio, said, "For the past week, they have attacked my patriotism and even my fitness to serve as Commander-in-Chief. Well, here is my answer to them: I will not have my commitment to defend this country questioned by those who refused to serve when they could've and who misled America into Iraq." Last week, the Vietnam War became an issue again. Democrats seized upon new evidence that seemed to show that George W. Bush had used political influence to be assigned to the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam War.

By early September, Bush's approval rating was up by nearly ten points, and some polls had him ahead of Kerry by as much as eleven points. The recent changes in the Kerry campaign staff have come amid rumors about further shakeups at the top, with Cahill a primary target. "Mary Beth is doing a superb job," Shrum told me. "She is going to run this campaign. And we will win this campaign." The second rumored target is Shrum, to which he said, "It's all bullshit."

There have been tensions inside the Kerry campaign almost from the start, the sort of complaints that have followed Shrum throughout his career: of pushing rivals out of the way, of isolating the candidate, of blurring the message. "Shrum was always a divisive force," Gore's former campaign chairman, Tony Coelho, said. "The issue is that Shrum likes to take control." A senior official in the Gore campaign, who asked to remain anonymous, said, "Look at every campaign that he's involved with. There are body bags." This environment is what David M. Halbfinger, of the New York *Times*, described as "the Shrum curse"—a phrase that greatly annoys Shrum.

In the summer of 2003, Shrum was feuding with Jim Jordan, the campaign manager, with Chris Lehane, the communications director (with whom Shrum also battled during the Gore campaign), and with Andrei Cherny, the chief speechwriter. Jordan was upset that Shrum, in the words of someone to whom he confided, insisted on "secret meetings with Kerry" so that he could weigh in last. When Kerry officially announced his candidacy, that September, Jordan and others believed that Cherny's speechwriting style, embracing short sentences, would make Kerry sound more natural as a speaker.

There were arguments over how best to compete with Howard Dean, whose opposition to the war in Iraq had galvanized many Democrats. Shrum believed that Kerry looked and sounded Presidential—that attacking a fellow-Democrat would undercut this advantage. In September, four months before the Iowa caucuses, Lehane, whose more forceful strategic approach increasingly differed from Shrum's, quit and went to work for Wesley Clark. (Lehane refuses to comment.) In November, Kerry fired Jordan and replaced him with Cahill. A friend warned Cahill that taking the job would be "like becoming the mayor of Beirut." When Shrum was asked about his internal battles with Jordan, he said, "I promised Kerry not to talk about it. He asked all of us not to." (Jordan, like Lehane, will not comment.)

In the next few months, Cahill established her authority. With Shrum's help, Kerry began to seem warmer in public forums; he also became more animated, as when he started to mock Bush's "Bring them on" remark during the early months of the Iraq war. He waived public financing in the primaries, as Dean had done—and as Bush was doing—thus freeing himself from spending restrictions; and he and Shrum decided to shift their resources to the first contest, the caucuses in Iowa, effectively abandoning the New Hampshire primary. The campaign also introduced a series of advertisements that contrasted sharply with the procession of mostly Shrum-produced television ads on a checklist of issues—health care, lost jobs, Big Oil, and the drug companies. These new spots were more personal—two thirty-second biographical ads, in particular, evoked Kerry's Vietnam service—and were produced by the political media consultant Jim Margolis, whose communications firm had been working for Kerry since early 2001. They were helped in no small measure by the surprise participation of a Kerry crewmate, a former Green Beret lieutenant named Jim Rassmann, whose life Kerry had saved.

Two weeks before the Iowa vote, on January 19, 2004, Shrum had told the conservative columnist Robert Novak that Kerry would win. "Shrum has seldom made such forecasts to me about his clients in the more than thirty years I have known him, but when he has they have been accurate," Novak, a friend of Shrum's, wrote after the caucuses.

Shrum remembers a moment on the night of the Iowa caucuses when he and Kerry were seated across from each other on the campaign bus. Shrum wore a magenta cashmere scarf that his friend the attorney Robert Bennett had given him in 1999, which he had come to believe brought good luck. A Fox News reporter handed him the network's entry-poll result, indicating that Kerry would win. "I look at it and I almost started to cry because it had been so long," Shrum recalls. "It was very cold, it was dark, and I handed it across the aisle to Kerry, and he looks at it and he gets up, and I get up, and he hugs me."

"The candidate has to have someone whom he believes and believes that he has some magic that will pull him through," the media consultant Carter Eskew, who hired Shrum to work for Gore in 2000, said. "What happens in these campaigns is that there are these critical moments where judgments have to be made and decisions have to be made with completely imperfect information, so it has to be on gut, on faith, and if the candidate doesn't have someone in whom he has that faith he's in trouble." Kerry and Shrum had a natural affinity: they are both Catholic, were born the same year, and have the same political hero—John F. Kennedy. Above all, Shrum helped Kerry win a close reëlection contest against William Weld, the Massachusetts governor, in 1996.

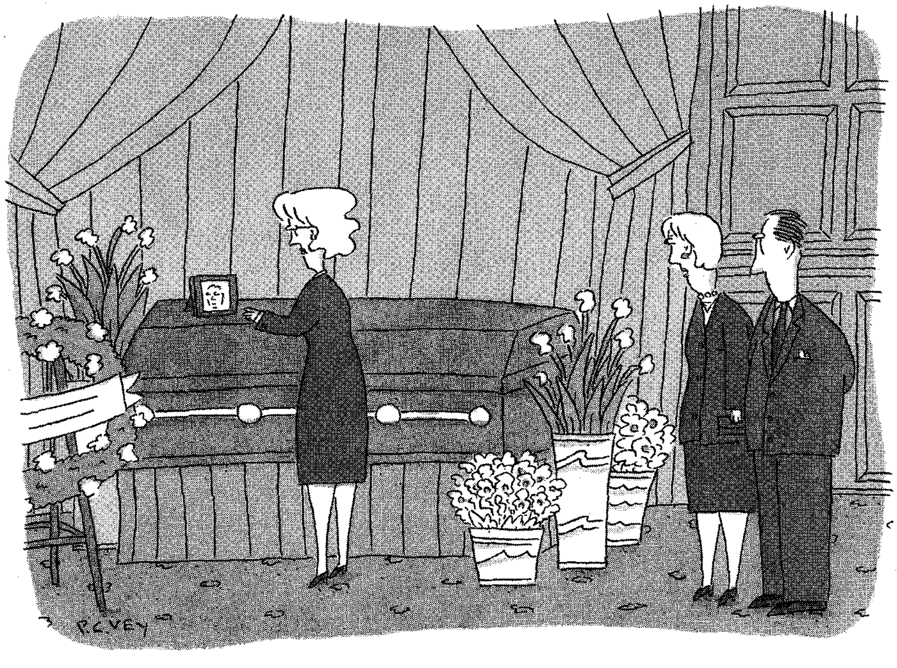
The former Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey, who is now the president of the New School, in New York, and who employed Shrum in his 1992 Presidential campaign, says that Shrum is "fortunate to be working for a candidate he knows very well and who is capable of taking charge and remaining calm down the stretch." But Kerrey, who respects Shrum, points out, as others have, that Shrum's successes have all been in state races. "Managing a campaign on the national stage—especially in a rapidly changing technological environment—coupled with the temporarily silenced tensions in the Democratic Party, is orders of magnitude more difficult."

One day last May, when the campaign seemed to be going well, Bob Shrum was in his office doing several things at once: hurriedly eating Chinese food from a container, talking on the phone, wiping his brow, and pounding the carpet with his foot; Nicorette gum wrappers lay on his table, the detritus that comes with being a onetime heavy smoker. He is bald, somewhat overweight, and has the pasty complexion of someone rarely exposed to light. His walls are covered with testimonials to a lifetime of liberal causes—framed news stories of politicians he has worked for, and letters from, among others, Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and the politician to whom he is closest, Ted Kennedy. (Shrum has written speeches for many of the Kennedys, including Arnold Schwarzenegger, the California governor, who is married to Maria Shriver. "I helped write his inaugural address," Shrum said. "He's an old friend of mine.")

Many of his speeches are eerily similar—in their populism, in their liberalism, in the rhythms of their language. "A classic Shrum speech has two hallmarks: it's populist ('I'm on your side'), and it's rhetorical ('Sail against the wind')," Martin Kaplan, who wrote speeches for Vice-President Walter Mondale and is now the associate dean of the U.S.C. Annenberg School for Communication, in Los Angeles, said in an e-mail. They are filled with invocations to "fight" against a sinister consortium known as the "special interests." One could hear Shrum in Al Gore's acceptance speech in 2000, when he said, "Whether you're in a suburb or an inner city, whether you raise crops or drive hogs and cattle on a farm, drive a big rig on the interstate or drive e-commerce on the Internet, whether you're starting out to raise your own family or getting ready to retire after a lifetime of hard work, so often powerful forces and powerful interests stand in your way, and the odds seem stacked against you, even as you do what's right for you and your family."

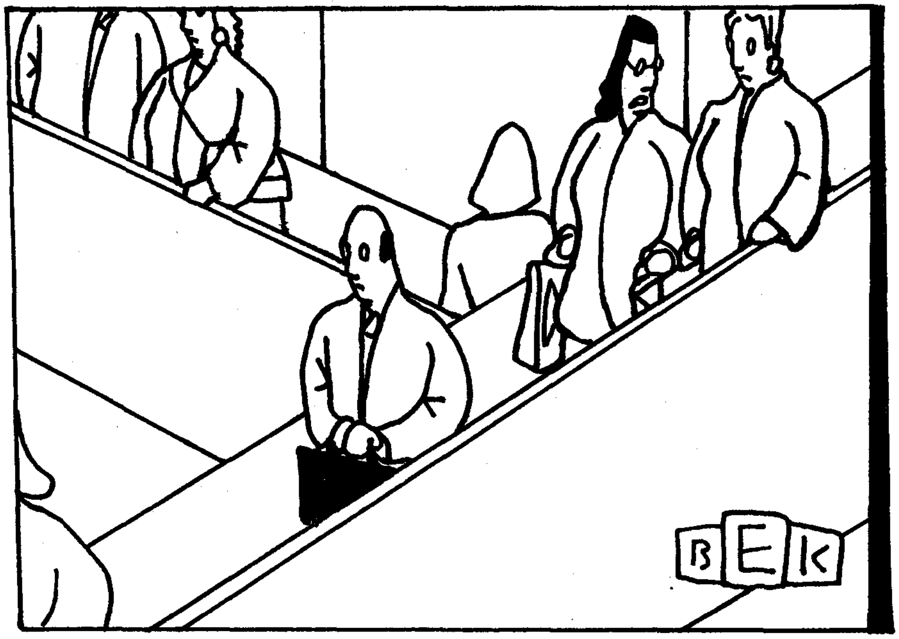
Robert Shrum grew up with the language of liberalism; a framed photograph of F.D.R. was on display in the Shrum house, in Culver City, California. His father, Clarence, a tool-and-die maker, was the first Shrum to vote Democratic; his mother, Cecelia, enrolled Bob and his sister, Barbara, in Catholic and Jesuit schools. Shrum attended Loyola High School, in Los Angeles, and became a member of the debate team. He preferred books to fraternizing. "One of the great blessings of my life is that I had an education that people don't get anymore," Shrum said. "I went to a Jesuit high school and I had to read the Iliad in Greek, which I wasn't very good at but which I learned a lot from. I sort of fell in love with the ancient world." He also fell in love with politics. He joined the Culver City Young Democrats in high school, and when he graduated, in 1960, he volunteered to work in John Kennedy's campaign for President. (In a stroke of geographic luck, the Democratic National Convention was held that year in Los Angeles.) He was assigned to the office of Pierre Salinger, Kennedy's press secretary, where he fetched coffee, rewrote minor press releases, and took visitors up to J.F.K.'s suite. One day, he escorted Averell Harriman, the former New York governor, who asked if he'd ever met Kennedy. Harriman insisted that Shrum accompany him. "Kennedy engaged me in this conversation about where I was going to go to college," Shrum remembers. He still speaks worshipfully about J.F.K.

Shrum was the valedictorian of Loyola, and won a National Merit Scholarship. The college he chose to attend was Georgetown. He joined the debate team, and was judged the nation's best college debater at the National Debate Tournament in West Point. Laurence Tribe, a



"That's the fourth husband she's put in the ground without any concern for what it's doing to the environment."

law professor at Harvard, who became a friend, remembers judging an intercollegiate debate contest in 1962 which Shrum won. "He was both very logical and very persuasive," Tribe recalls. "Most debaters in college debate one subject over one year and carry around three-by-five cards. They are machine guns without any particular aim."



"I have no idea where we parked the car, or why we exist."

In 1965, Shrum received a partial scholarship to Harvard Law School; he won the Ames Competition for the best appellate advocacy. But he didn't want to be a lawyer; he skipped the bar exam, and took a job in the speech department at Boston College, where he doubled as the debate coach. (With a teaching deferment, he escaped the draft.) After Shrum told Tribe that he imagined writing speeches for someone like Ted Kennedy, Tribe approached people he knew in Kennedy's office and on the staff of New York's reform mayor, John V. Lindsay. Shrum was hired to replace Jeff Greenfield, now of CNN, in writing speeches for Lindsay.

In the 1972 Presidential campaign, Robert Squier, the political media consultant, got Shrum a job as a speechwriter for Senator Edmund Muskie, the early front-runner for the Democratic nomination. Anne Wexler, then a liberal activist in Connecticut and now a Washington lobbyist, thought that Muskie was too cautious, but she approved of his message. "I voted for your speeches," she remembers telling Shrum when they met. After Muskie dropped out, Shrum was recruited to the McGovern campaign. He wrote McGovern's "Come home, America" acceptance speech (come home, that is, from Vietnam), which many believed foreshadowed McGovern's disastrous candidacy and which, in any case, almost no one saw, because it was delivered at about 3 A.M. in the East. When McGovern lost forty-nine states to Richard Nixon, Shrum was unemployed.

In the next several years, Shrum was a Kennedy Fellow at Harvard; wrote a column for *Rolling Stone* with his close friend Patrick Caddell; and worked for McGovern in the Senate. In 1976, Caddell became the chief pollster for Jimmy Carter, and urged Shrum to sign on with the Carter Presidential campaign.

Shrum lasted only ten days, according to Jules Witcover's book, "Marathon." After the Pennsylvania primary, which clinched the nomination, Shrum wrote a letter of resignation to Carter, addressing him as if he were a conservative heretic: "I was disturbed to discover that you might favor a substantial increase in the defense budget in spite of your previous pledge to reduce that budget" was one of many complaints. The letter, as Witcover reports, "was not intended to be made public." Shrum took refuge in the Boston home of two friends, the historian Doris Kearns Goodwin and her husband, the writer Richard Goodwin. Carter's team saw Shrum as an ideologue; for Richard Goodwin, who had worked closely with Robert Kennedy, Shrum was "a true believer" in "what we used to call 'liberalism' and now call 'progressive' principles."

Three years later, Shrum, on Goodwin's recommendation, helped with Ted Kennedy's doomed challenge to Carter's renomination. (At the Convention, Kennedy delivered the speech that, in its conclusion, has become a Shrum signature: "For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die.") Shrum believed, as Ralph Nader does today, that there was little difference between the two parties' nominees. (Shrum now calls Carter "a great ex-President.") After Kennedy lost, Shrum became his press secretary, and later joined Caddell and the political consultant David Doak to establish a media-consulting firm. The Caddell-Shrum partnership lasted less than a year, and, when it ended, the two were no longer on speaking terms. A Washington journalist recalls that Shrum could be "frighteningly volatile," and Caddell had a similar reputation. Doak Shrum, as the firm then became known, worked on a variety of statewide efforts, including the winning campaigns, in 1986, of Senator Barbara Mikulski, of Maryland, and Senator Alan Cranston, of California.

In 1988, Shrum went to work for Dick Gephardt's Presidential campaign. (Gephardt was Shrum's second choice; he had hoped that Mario Cuomo would run.) Gephardt campaigned as a "fighter" for forgotten Americans, including workers whose jobs were being shipped abroad, and won the Iowa caucuses. But Dukakis won the New Hampshire primary, and, five weeks after Iowa, Gephardt left the race.

Shrum has been accused of making ads that, like his speeches, are merely variations on favored populist themes, and some of this criticism can be traced to an ad that he and Doak made for Bob Kerrey in 1992. (The ad bore a strong resemblance to spots that had been used by Gephardt in 1988.) In this ad, Kerrey, standing in a hockey rink, denounced Japanese trade practices—a surprise to those who knew him as a supporter of free trade. (The tagline for Gephardt's 1988 ad threatening South Korea with new tariffs was "It's your fight, too." The tagline for Kerrey's was "Fight back, America!")

Recently, Kerrey recalled that his campaign chairman had had to step down because of illness, and had recommended the veteran consultant Tad Devine as a replacement. Kerrey agreed, but Devine wanted a free hand to bring in a fresh media team—Shrum and Doak. They "didn't know me," Kerrey said. He described how candidates, feeling the pressure to avoid gaffes, say the same thing repeatedly. "And when you become automatic," he said, "it's less likely that the part of you that has to kick in when someone shows you a television ad and you should say, 'Jesus, that's not me. I'm not going to run that television ad'— Instead, you just automatically say, 'You guys must know what you're talking about.' "

Shrum worked once more with Ted Kennedy, in 1994, in a difficult reëlection campaign against Mitt Romney, who is now the governor of Massachusetts. "At key moments in Ted Kennedy's life, when he needed him for a speech or anything, Bob was there," Doris Kearns Goodwin said. Kennedy, echoing Bill Nelson, said, "He's sort of an extended part of our family." It was Kennedy who recommended Shrum to Kerry in 1996, in Kerry's race against Weld.

By then, the Shrum-Doak partnership had ended just as bitterly as had Shrum-Caddell. Shrum began a partnership with Tad Devine, which endures to this day (as does his relationship with Donilon). By the time of the Kerry-Weld race, Kerry's prospects for reëlection seemed weak. Shrum's contribution was to respond to Weld's attacks and help shift the focus of the campaign away from issues like crime, welfare, and taxes. Instead, the moderate Weld was portrayed as a lackey of Newt Gingrich and other conservatives. "Beginning in September, the Kerry campaign turned on a dime," Weld, who credits Shrum, recalls. "It became more focussed. The death blow was linking me to the Republican right and having me morph into Gingrich or Jesse Helms." It wasn't true, but Kerry won, with a margin of seven per cent.

The Kerry-Weld race was a reminder that Shrum, over the years, has shown that he can fight as nastily, and unfairly, as anyone. Shrum today acknowledges that at times he went too far. In 1998, he initially planned to work in the California gubernatorial primary for a former law-school classmate, Representative Jane Harman, but then agreed to work with the businessman Alfred A. Checchi; his ads charged that Harman had voted against Medicare and home health care. In 1990, an ad he did for Jim Mattox, who challenged Ann Richards for the Democratic nomination for governor of Texas, said, "Did she use marijuana, or something worse, like cocaine, not as a college kid, but as a forty-seven-year-old elected official sworn to uphold the law?" When Shrum was asked about that, he said, "I'm not going to talk about the ad except to say the ad was wrong." Did he do it? "My firm did it, and therefore I take responsibility for it." In 1990, in Florida, Shrum helped to plan Bill Nelson's gubernatorial-primary run against Lawton Chiles—a campaign that made an issue of the fact that Chiles, who won the primary, had been treated for depression. This history makes it all the more puzzling that the Kerry campaign so far has been relatively mild-mannered.

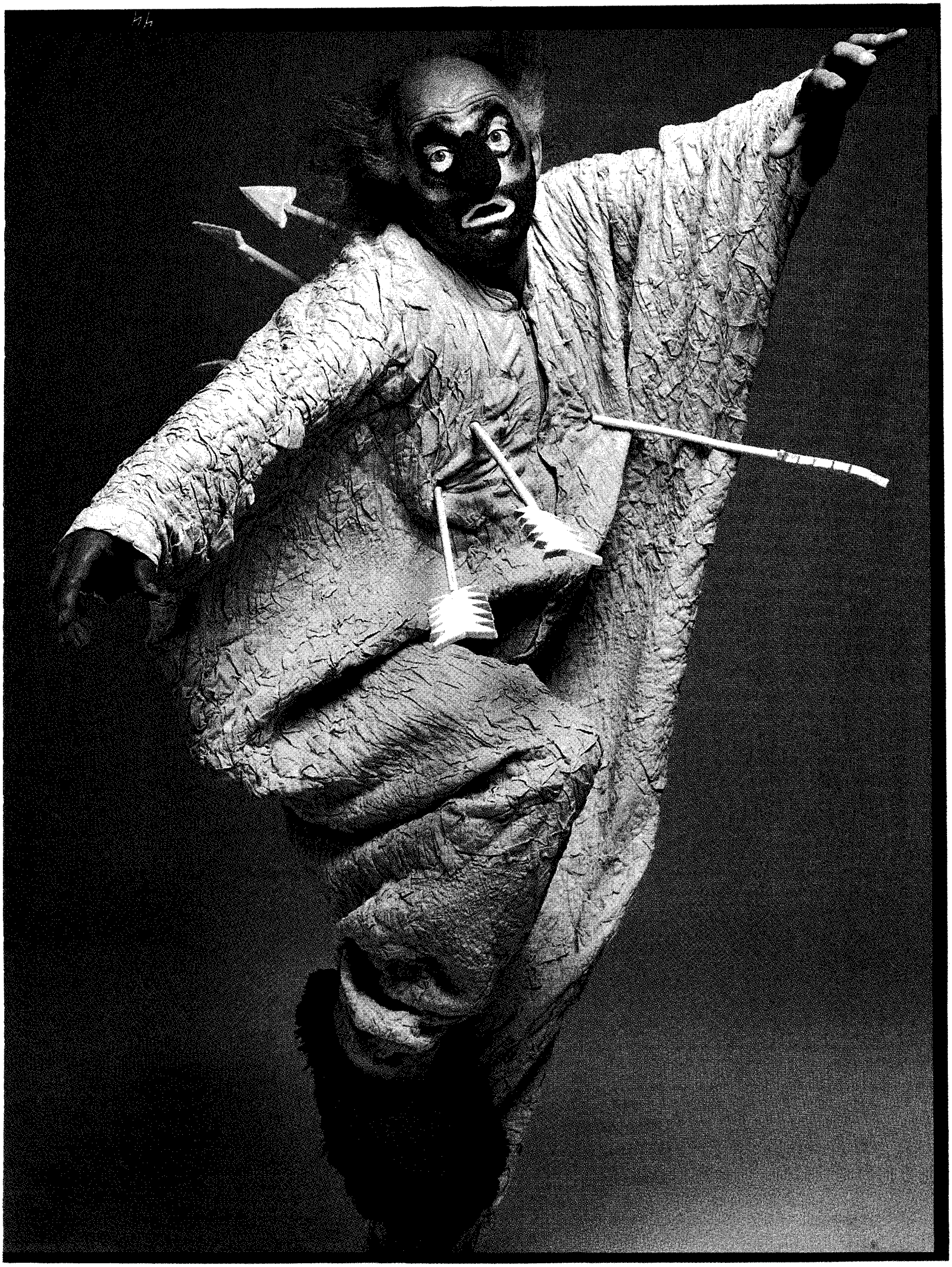
For a consultant, financial motives may trump ideology, as Jerry Rafshoon, who ran Jimmy Carter's media operation and advised Howard Dean this year, points out. "Shrum is an example of what's wrong with the political-consultant culture," Rafshoon said. "It's a profitable business for so many people. He has one campaign, a populist us-versus-them campaign. It's the same campaign over and over. He's a mercenary. He'd like you to think he's an idealist."

This issue was examined by Susan B. Glasser, of the Washington *Post*, in an analysis of Checchi's race in the California primary. Checchi, with Shrum as his leading consultant, spent forty million dollars of his own money, a record at the time, and won just thirteen per cent of the vote, losing to Gray Davis, whose campaign slogan—"Experience money can't buy"—was written by Shrum's ex-partner Doak. Shrum's strategy was to use negative ads, which made the newcomer sound like just another politician—not the image that Checchi had hoped for. Pat Caddell, a friend of Checchi's, warned the candidate that Shrum, along with the pollster Mark Penn, had incentives to spend lavishly.

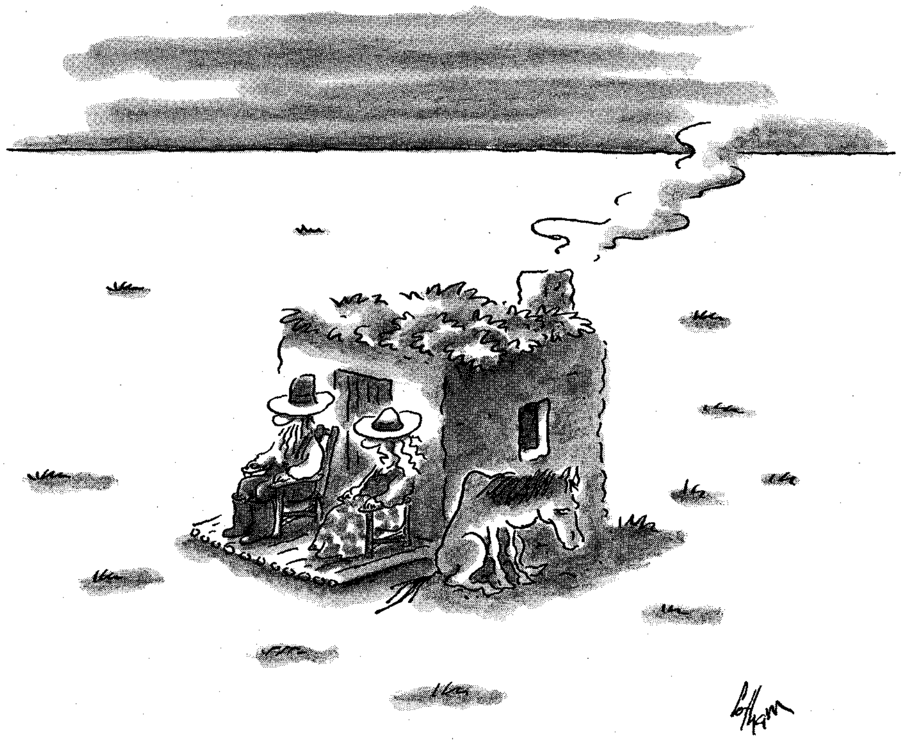
In addition to a flat fee that eventually totalled five hundred thousand dollars, Glasser reported, Shrum's firm asked for a twelve-per-cent commission on the gross amount spent on television advertising, which turned out to be just over twenty-nine million dollars. (Checchi's lawyers reduced the fee to 2.9 per cent.) Shrum produced a hundred television ads, Glasser reported, only forty of which aired, yet four hundred thousand dollars' worth of production costs for those ads were paid in early 1998 to another firm, Georgetown Post, which was in the same building as Shrum's firm. (Shrum told Glasser that he had no financial interest in this firm.) Finally, on Shrum and Penn's recommendation, the campaign spent two million dollars on a direct-mail firm. Later, it emerged that Penn was paid forty-five thousand dollars by the direct-mail firm for what he said was helping to "target" where mail should be sent, and Shrum was paid an additional thirty thousand dollars to help write the copy. In all, Glasser reported, Shrum's firm, which that year was engaged in many other races, was paid "as much as" two million dollars, "not counting expenses." ("The piece is not an accurate reflection of what happened in that campaign," Shrum told me, and he added, "The amount of money she said we made is not accurate. We made less.")

There was a happier outcome in 2000, when Shrum worked on Jon Corzine's successful run for the Senate in New Jersey. Corzine, a former co-C.E.O. of Goldman Sachs, spent sixty-three million dollars, most of it his own money, and was a satisfied customer. "Contrary to the popular view, he was the most disciplined adviser I had with respect to money," Corzine said of Shrum. "He was constantly pushing me away from my own instincts to try to push more forcefully into the television medium."

Shrum's personal life is centered on Marylouise Oates, whom he met in the early nineteen-eighties, when Oates, who was divorced and had one child, worked at the Los Angeles *Times*, as a



SHOWCASE BY RICHARD AVEDON *The Russian clown Slava Polunin, in his existential fantasy "Slava's Snowshow."*



"Sometimes I wish you had taken that job in New York."

copy editor and then as a gossip columnist. They found that they shared an interest in theology (Oates, who had dropped out of the University of Pennsylvania, earned a degree from the Yale Divinity School), as well as in art, politics, and Italy. Shrum proposed to her over dinner at Spago, in Los Angeles, in 1987, and asked that they be married in a Catholic ceremony. Ted Kennedy held an engagement party for them. They bought a house in Washington, and commuted for a couple of years until her son, Michael Oates Palmer, graduated from a California high school.

Shrummy and Oatsie, as they call each other, talk on the phone perhaps ten times during the day. "She keeps Bob in touch with a much broader group of people," said Donna E. Shalala, a former member of the Clinton Cabinet, who is the president of the University of Miami. "He doesn't have time to listen to everyone, and Oatsie is a world-class listener." They swap gossip and talk about politics and about the new novel she is writing. (Her first was set in the antiwar movement of the sixties; two others were co-written with Barbara Mikulski.) Shrum doesn't cook, doesn't shop for his own clothes, doesn't know how to operate his elaborate home-entertainment system, and doesn't fix things, and, because he is easily distracted, Oates won't let him drive a car.

Shrum and Oates believe in many of the same liberal causes, with gay rights near the top of the list. The gay activist and writer David Mixner, who worked with Oates in Eugene McCarthy's 1968 campaign, considers her his "best friend" and Shrum one of his oldest friends. "She's been one of the biggest champions of gay-and-lesbian rights—as has Bob—since 1978," he said. Mixner, who lives in Washington, said that between the nineteen-eighties and the early nineties nearly three hundred friends of his died of AIDS, and in that period the Shrums gave time and money to help build "a primary-care network of support for people with AIDS." Oates is today the official liaison of the gay-and-lesbian community to the Kerry finance committee.

In Washington, a group of friends consider themselves part of what they call "the Oates/Shrum meal plan," and it includes the lobbyist Anne Wexler and her husband, Joe Duffey; David Mixner; Robert and Ellen Bennett; Andrea Mitchell, of NBC, and the Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan; Susan Spencer, of CBS, and Thomas Oliphant, of the Boston *Globe;* Jon Corzine; the NBC producer Tammy Haddad; Linda Douglass, of ABC, and her husband, the lawyer John Phillips; and the former Los Angeles *Times* reporter Kathleen Hendrix. Shalala describes Oates as "a world-class networker. When I was in D.C., I talked to her every day."

Oates, who is sixty, wears oversized square eyeglasses with colorful frames. Her blond hair is in a bob, and she wears little makeup; she talks rapidly, describes friends or waiters as "a peach," and has a gift for friendship. "We are two odd ducks," she said one night in early summer during dinner at Tosca, the couple's favorite Washington restaurant. "We are so lucky to have found each other. And good kissers, too!" Shrum winced when she said this, but his hand moved from the banquette where they were sitting and rested on her back.

I asked her to describe Shrum's talent. "He's standing between us and the end of civilization. No shit," she said, and laughed hard. He winced again. "The conservatives in this country are so determined to take apart not just the last ten years but the New Deal," she went on. "Why are we telling people whose children have diseases that can be cured by stem-cell research that some guy, George Bush—who doesn't go to church, by the way . . ."

"Oatsie, please," Shrum softly interjected.

"No, I'm saying it on the record. I have a master's degree in theology."

"Oatsie, stop. Please." Under the table, in a faint rumble, his foot slapped the carpet.

She said, "Has he told you yet how he hears people's voices in his head?"

He tensed. "Please don't," he said, almost inaudibly.

"When Shrummy's writing a speech, he hears the person he's writing the speech for in his head," she said. "That's why all Shrummy's speeches sound like the person he's writing for."

"I don't want to be known as a speechwriter," he said, resignedly. Speechwriters are anonymous, like servants. (Michael Palmer told me that during the 2000 campaign Shrum would write a speech "and in every interview Gore would describe how he worked on the speech on his own computer. It frustrates Bob. What hurts his feelings is when his work is not acknowledged as existing.")

"Well, you can be known as a strategist!" Oates declared.

"Being able to write decently is almost a disability," he said.

"Excuse me, who's selling our brand of groceries? We have a brand of groceries—it's called the Democratic Party grocery. Who is saying, 'This is a good canned soup for you. It's got a lot of nutrition. It's got Social Security, and health care. It's got mammograms for women before they're fifty-five. It's got a Pap smear'?"

Shrum tried to interrupt, but she announced, "Shrummy, you have the voice of our party!"

When I asked about his vices, Oates did not pause for breath: "When Shrummy comes to a decision that something is right—this is the upside of his downside and the downside of his upside—he is immovable. I think it's all these years and years of Jesuit training that basically says, there is a right answer . . ."

He strained to get in a word and temper what might be viewed as harshness: "The people on the other side aren't bad; they're just wrong."

"I think they're evil," she said.

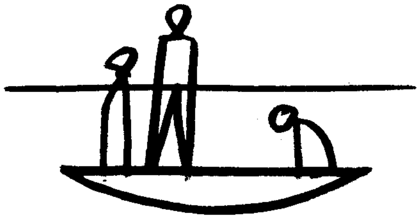
"If you just sit there and say they're evil, it gets in the way of understanding," he said. "It makes you feel self-righteous."

One day, I asked Shrum what might prompt him to quit a campaign today. He said that he would not work for a candidate who "exploited race" or was "homophobic" or opposed "making the society fairer"—or who didn't "tell the truth to the country." He drew a distinction about truthtelling. "It's fundamental that you don't lie about issues of war and peace, because people get killed. I don't make adverse judgments about Franklin Roosevelt and Lucy Rutherford." (In 1998, during the height of the Clinton sex scandal, Shrum recalls, he was asked to write a response. His draft, which is framed on the wall outside his office, began, "No one who is not in my position can understand the remorse I feel today. I have fallen short of what you should expect from a President." Clinton, instead, denied any involvement with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky.)

Still, it is often considered shrewd politics to lie about one's opponent, or at least exaggerate his flaws, and Shrum has repeatedly shown a talent for this—in the Kerry-Weld race, the Chiles-Nelson race, and others. In preparing for Gore's 2000 race, Carter Eskew believed that the campaign needed a go-for-the-throat media team, and in 1999 he recruited Shrum's firm, along with Bill Knapp, who also created television spots for Gore, and the pollster Mark Penn. But in joining the Gore campaign Shrum was, in effect, replacing someone he called "a mentor," Bob Squier.

Shrum believed that it would be a mistake for Gore to attack Bush's competence. "It would have made Gore seem condescending," Shrum recalls, aware that this is how Gore was eventually perceived in the debates. At the same time, he pushed for his populist message, which was not always a comfortable fit with Gore, who was a hybrid of populist and New Democrat. In an appearance on CNN's "Capital Gang" after the Democratic National Convention, Kate O'Beirne, of the *National Review*, accused Gore of waging "class warfare." Shrum replied, "You may call it class warfare. I think it's just standing up for people, for the middle class and for working families." Shrum still insists that Gore is a true populist. Marty Kaplan, the one-time Mondale speechwriter, said, "Gore's populism seemed more poll-generated than organic to his history and character." Kaplan is among many who have pointed out that, if populism did not quite fit Al Gore, it doesn't fit the patrician John Kerry in the least.

By the time of the 2004 campaign, Shrum wanted no part of old disputes. When he was told that Tony Coelho had called him "divisive," he said, "I have nothing adverse to say about Tony." When he was asked about his split with Caddell, Shrum said, "I kind of miss his friendship." Inside the Kerry campaign, however, Shrum was not so reticent. In April, Andrei Cherny, who had been Kerry's chief speechwriter, left to take a job at the Democratic National Committee. "I had nothing to do with Cherny's leaving," Shrum said, but that is not what friends of Cherny believe. That month, Cahill, the campaign manager, realizing that Kerry would have more to spend on advertising than had initially been expected—some hundred and twenty million dollars—decided to reduce the nine per cent of each dollar that the Shrum and the Margolis firms split. She proposed to shave it to about seven per cent, and told the two firms to work out how they would divide it. Since Shrum and his two partners worked full time in the campaign, he proposed that Margolis accept less than half. But Margolis had worked for Kerry without pay from January of 2001 until September of 2003, and his payroll included fifteen media buyers; he was unwilling to become less than an equal partner. Cahill recused herself from the negotiations, which Margolis took as a sign that Shrum had the upper hand. Margolis resigned (though he still buys advertising time for the campaign). Cahill quickly recruited Bill Knapp to replace him.



Despite the turnover, there has probably been less infighting than in previous Shrum campaigns. Coöperation has been on display at Cahill's morning conference call. "When I pose a question, there is usually a long silence," Cahill said, "and Shrum is not afraid to be the first to move into the silence and speak. That is a very valuable quality in a person. Everyone else wants to be right." John Sasso, Kerry's most senior adviser on the road, said of Shrum, "He's got a creative mind. He's always proposing ideas. The thing I applaud is that he is always willing to put his stake in the ground and say, 'This is what I believe.' "

The atmosphere may not endure as the Kerry campaign restructures and rivalries form. The task facing the campaign is to reverse the polls, and to counter the attacks on its candidate by the Bush campaign and groups like the Swift Boat veterans. Senior Bush campaign officials say that they were baffled by the Kerry campaign as it unfolded over the summer, and they blamed the candidate. "I think Kerry's a flawed candidate, but they have an A-team," Bush's chief media adviser, Mark McKinnon, said. "They are smart enough to adapt. The question is: Can Kerry?" Not everyone agreed that Kerry had an A advertising team. Linda Thaler Kaplan, the C.E.O. and chief creative officer of the Kaplan Thaler Group, who helped create the "Kodak Moment" ads, thinks that Kerry's television ads are mediocre. "There's no metaphor, there's no poetry," she said. "The ads look like a by-product of so many focus groups—they cram in as much information as possible. Everyone sits around and says, 'Gee, you didn't mention. . . .' "

These spots, thirty in all since the start of the campaign, usually featured Kerry or Edwards looking into the camera or giving a stump speech. (One, a health-care spot called "Paperwork," showed Kerry making a speech and vowing, "We will save literally billions of dollars in health-care costs in America by becoming more streamlined and more efficient.") The ads featured the same jumble of issues, the same "He's a husband and father. A hunter, hockey player . . . tough prosecutor, advocate for kids . . . a combat veteran. . . ." They aired locally in about twenty so-called "battleground" states, where the contest was still close.

Tad Devine defends the ads, saying, "If we were twenty points ahead, we might run a 'Morning in America' ad"—referring to the 1984 Reagan ad. "What we're doing is trying to talk to voters who are persuadable, and we feel that the way to talk to them is to talk about John Kerry and who he is and to offer specific issue content. . . . Our job now is not emotion. We are trying to reach swing voters, so that they know more about John Kerry and associate him with issues." Mike Donilon believes that Madison Avenue makes a mistake in thinking that a candidate is sold "like a product. . . . The goal is not to create some new sizzle, some dramatic moment. It's really to let people know who Kerry is."

Still, media advisers in the Kerry camp had a financial incentive to recommend more advertising. They will divide among themselves about eight million dollars of the advertising budget—with Shrum Devine Donilon getting about five million dollars. By contrast, the Bush campaign's McKinnon says that he is paid a flat salary (which he refuses to disclose), and he asked for advice from a dozen advertising executives around the country who met weekly to propose and scrutinize ads. The Kerry campaign did not assemble an outside team, and turned down a chance to use an advertising campaign created by the filmmaker Errol Morris.

A more urgent problem was that until August Kerry did not have the kind of rapid-response team that Bill Clinton had put together in 1992 and that Bush now had. Bush's team, which is directed by Steve Schmidt, the deputy communications director, has digitized every Kerry vote and speech and newspaper article, and assigned people to monitor every Kerry appearance. In early summer, the Bush team recorded every national broadcast and cable newscast and had four people watching multiple television sets at campaign headquarters in Arlington; the Kerry campaign had one volunteer watching three television sets and scribbling notes in a room on the seventh floor of Kerry's McPherson Square headquarters, in downtown Washington. And while fund-raising on the Internet had gone well—about thirty-five per cent of the $233.5 million that Kerry had raised through July was generated via Web donations—Kerry was far behind Bush in other ways. By August, the Kerry campaign had collected two million Web addresses and five hundred thousand Web volunteers. In contrast, the Bush campaign had collected more than six million Web addresses and a million volunteers. According to Matthew Dowd, a Bush strategist, "We can now instantly talk to ten per cent of the fifty-five million votes we need to win the election."

James Carville worried that Kerry's message was cluttered with too many facts. Every campaign, he says, revolves around a basic question: "Do you want change? Bush tries to change the subject to: 'Do you want a waffling candidate?' " Kerry and Bush are playing the hands they should, he told me in late spring. But, he went on, "If I show his picture to focus groups and half the people can't say, 'Oh, he's the guy who . . . ,' " then Kerry is not selling himself. "They have to see Kerry and associate something with him. The communications business is the only one in the world where you multiply by subtracting. The less you say, the more you're heard." By September, Carville's view had not changed. Shrum, when he addressed the subject, sounded like someone delivering a Shrum speech. "I think Kerry's message right now is clear," he said. "Bush has taken us in the wrong direction and made the wrong choices versus a new direction for America."

Kerry's choice of John Edwards as his running mate was popular among Democrats, but, in announcing his pick, in early July, Kerry in effect declared that domestic issues, not national security, were at the core of his campaign. Kerry spoke of "the threats we face," but only in passing. What this campaign "is all about," he declared, was the economic disparity between the haves and the have-nots, and he vowed that he would "fight" to create jobs and "fight" for universal health care. Andrew Sullivan quickly pointed out on his blog "that the Kerry campaign is fundamentally not about the war on terror. It's about economic inequality. And the premise is that an unequal country is not truly a united country." Sullivan dismissed the "fight" refrain as "Shrummery." As if to underscore this point, within a day Shrum's firm had produced seven new TV commercials, only one of which focussed on national security. Shrum believed, as he told me, that on national security "Kerry crossed the threshold on that issue at the Convention."

In preparing his acceptance speech for the Democratic Convention, Kerry asked several speechwriters—including the Kennedy-era veterans Theodore Sorensen and Richard Goodwin—to submit drafts, which went to Shrum. Shrum also told nearly everyone who asked that he had not written Kerry's speech—that Kerry had. And he said that Teresa Heinz Kerry had written her own "terrific" speech on the Convention's second night, even though many Democrats thought it less than terrific, because it was more about her than about her husband. (At the Convention, soon after Shrum told me that Teresa Kerry had written her own speech, an aide to Mrs. Kerry hugged Shrum and thanked him for helping.) Later, Shrum sat on the edge of a couch in a hotel suite with Oates, David Mixner, and another gay-activist friend, Jeff Soref. He wanted to see John Edwards's acceptance speech, and he preferred to watch on television. Keeping his eyes on the screen, he sipped Cabernet Sauvignon, ate popcorn, quivered every time a cell phone rang, and moved his lips along with the speech, announcing at various points, "Wait until the next line." He would be in the Fleet Center on the next night, when Kerry spoke; the candidate had invited Shrum and his wife to sit in the Kerry box. "No one has ever done that for me," Shrum said.

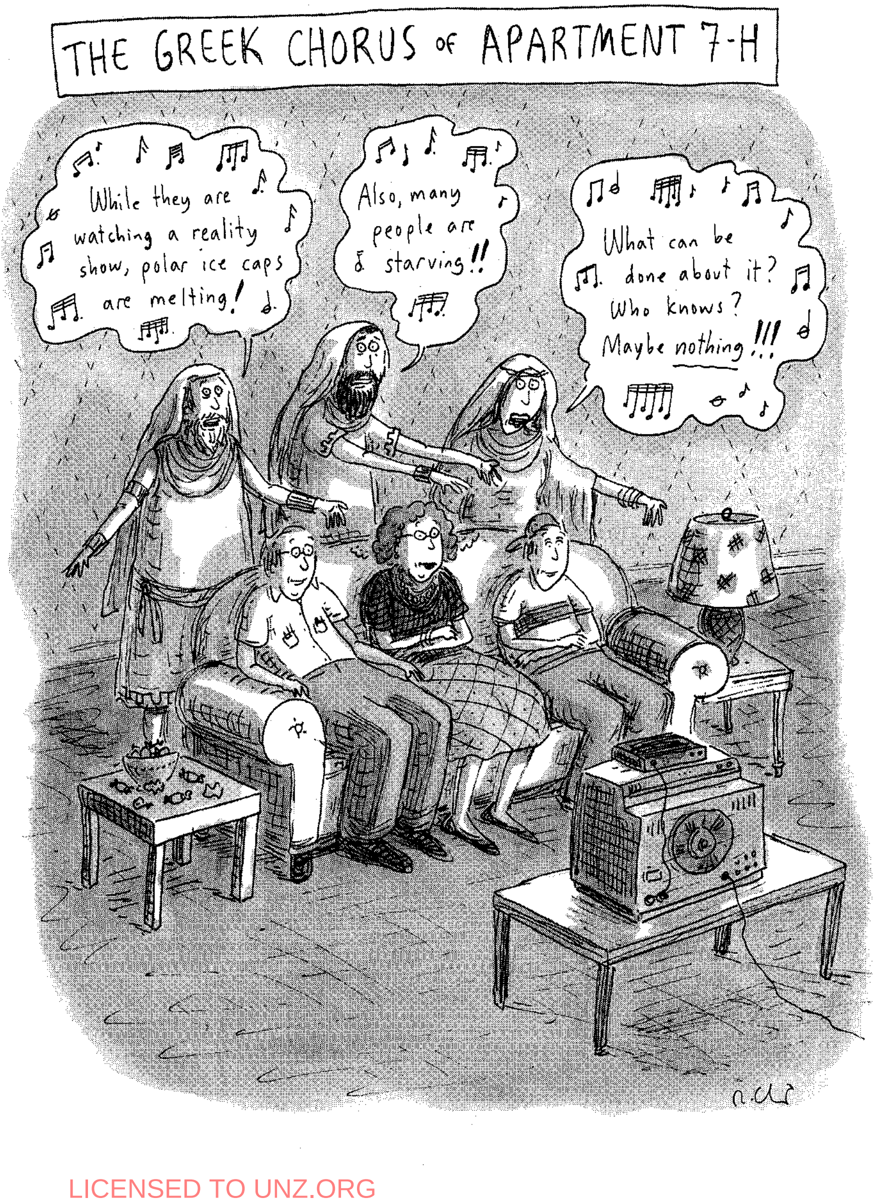
"Shrum-A-Lot" is the name that Oates pasted to a sign over the front door of the two-story gray shingled house on Cape Cod where she spends six months a year, working on her fiction, and where Shrum comes to stay on most weekends. There is one other sign visible from the street, a blue Kerry-Edwards poster on the living-room window. The Shrums' bookcases contain more volumes about Popes than about Presidents, more travel books than novels. The walls are dominated by seascapes, including a signed lithograph by Ted Kennedy, which was a present. Among the many photographs is one taken at Shrum's sixtieth birthday party: Kennedy kissing Shrum on the forehead while he leads a group of friends in singing "Happy Birthday."

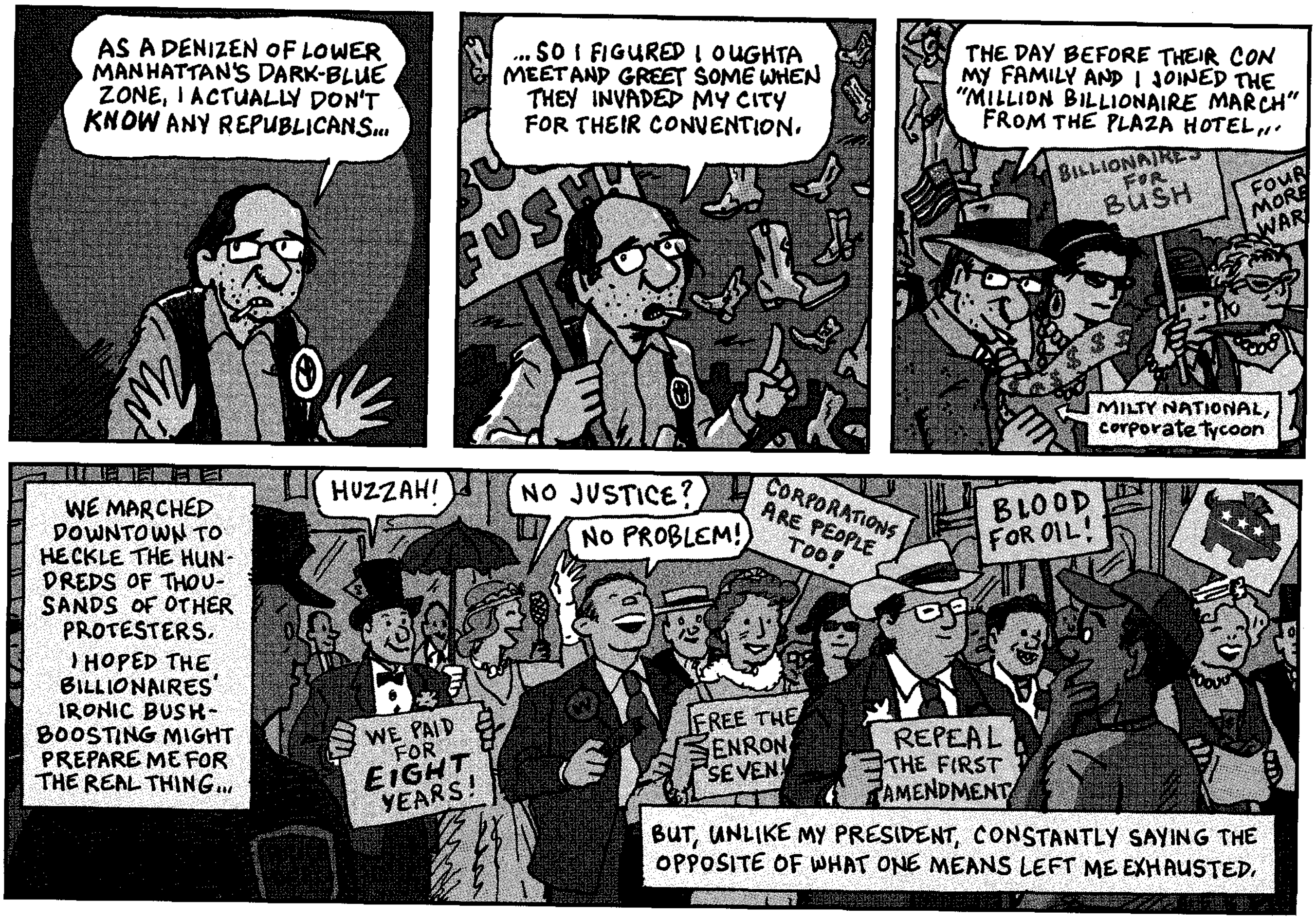
On a late-summer day, Shrum sat in a white wicker rocking chair on the porch out back, facing Cape Cod Bay, with Provincetown in the distance. His normally pale face had been touched by the sun, which turned his skin pink. His wife had prepared and left on a wicker table a lunch of brisket of beef, tomatoes and mozzarella, coleslaw, green salad, two hard cheeses, a loaf of French bread, brownies, and ice cream. Shrum was more relaxed than I had ever seen him.

"Elections are not like an Oscar, an award for past performance," he said. "They're a referendum on where a candidate wants to take the country in the future—that is, if you pass the threshold of people feeling comfortable with you." He expected that the polls would show the Presidential race seesawing back and forth into the fall, and thought that the debates would be critical. By late last week, Kerry had accepted three Presidential debates and Edwards had agreed to one Vice-Presidential debate; Bush was expected to agree to two encounters with Kerry.

Shrum is aware of critics who think that he is an old-style liberal of the McGovern-Kennedy type, and no match for Rove. Pat Caddell, one of these critics, said, "Saying he's 'chief strategist' is a joke. It's like me saying I'm a musician! Bob illustrates the misconception that slogans are visions. Both campaigns illustrate this, but it was most apparent at the Democratic Convention. Instead of talking about issues, they said, 'Oh, we're going to make John Kerry look strong on defense by repeating it again and again.' This is emblematic of what Shrum does. It's about words, which is what a debater or a speechwriter thinks."

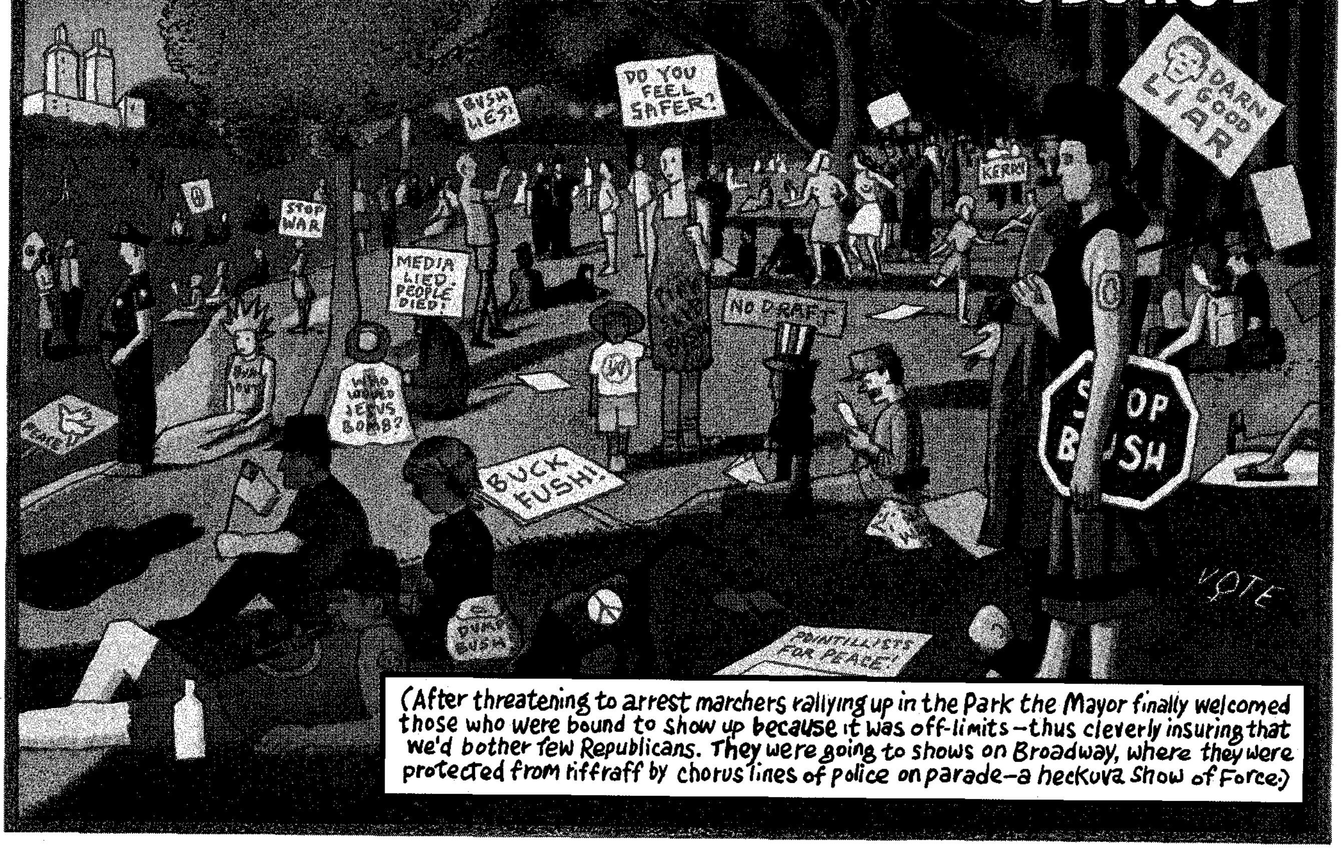
When I repeated Caddell's observation, Shrum's eyes narrowed and he said, "The strategic decisions John Kerry has made so far have been very smart." He left it at that. When I talked to Shrum last week, he insisted that Kerry was doing fine; he sounded unconcerned about Dick Cheney's assertion that a vote for Kerry left the nation more vulnerable to attack—not "smart politics," he said. (Kerry, for his part, called Cheney's statement "outrageous and shameful," and declared that Bush and Cheney "will say anything and do anything in order to get elected.") "You've got to keep your eye on where you think you have to go," Shrum said, adding that a new, aggressive candidate—one eager to take on Bush's record on the war in Iraq and the economy—is emerging. "John Kerry in the closing days of campaigns is a terrific candidate, and that's what we're going to see in the last two months of the campaign," Shrum said, a reminder of how Kerry had rebounded in the primaries. Shrum went on, "I don't know what Rove does, but we are a collegial group of people." ♦

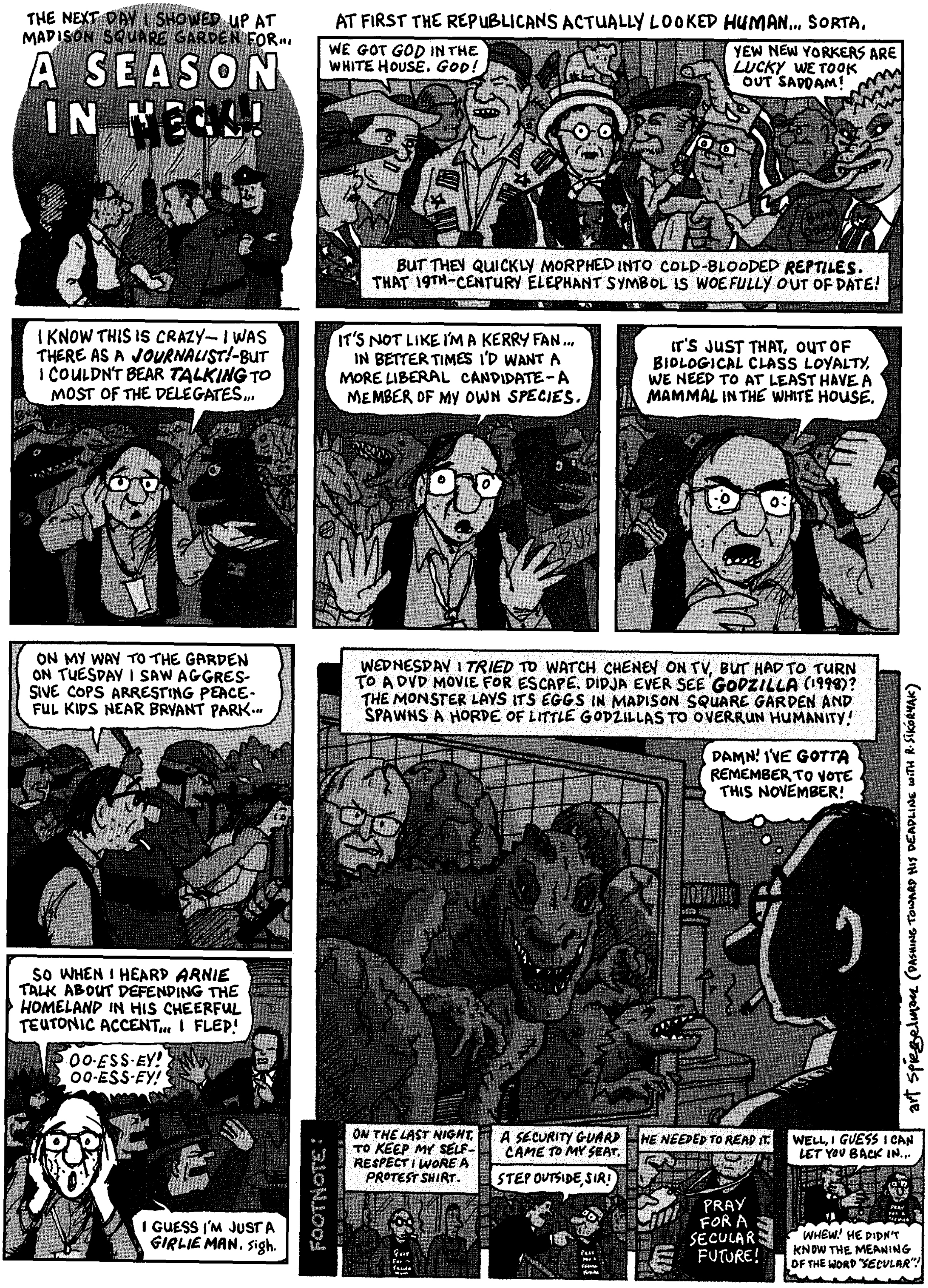

THE GREEK CHORUS of APARTMENT 7-H
While they are watching a reality show, polar ice caps are melting!
Also, many people are starving!!
What can be done about it? Who knows? Maybe nothing!!!
r.ch


AS A DENIZEN OF LOWER MANHATTAN'S DARK-BLUE ZONE, I ACTUALLY DON'T KNOW ANY REPUBLICANS...
BUCK FUSH!
...SO I FIGURED I OUGHTA MEET AND GREET SOME WHEN THEY INVADED MY CITY FOR THEIR CONVENTION.
THE DAY BEFORE THEIR CON MY FAMILY AND I JOINED THE "MILLION BILLIONAIRE MARCH" FROM THE PLAZA HOTEL...
BILLIONAIRES FOR BUSH
FOUR MORE WAR
MILTY NATIONAL, corporate tycoon
WE MARCHED DOWNTOWN TO HECKLE THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF OTHER PROTESTERS.
I HOPED THE BILLIONAIRES' IRONIC BUSH-BOOSTING MIGHT PREPARE ME FOR THE REAL THING...
HUZZAH!
NO JUSTICE?
NO PROBLEM!
CORPORATIONS ARE PEOPLE TOO!
BLOOD FOR OIL!
WE PAID FOR EIGHT YEARS!
FREE THE ENRON SEVEN!
REPEAL THE FIRST AMENDMENT
BUT, UNLIKE MY PRESIDENT, CONSTANTLY SAYING THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT ONE MEANS LEFT ME EXHAUSTED.

SO I HEADED UP TO CENTRAL PARK'S GREAT LAWN WITH THOUSANDS OF LIKE-MINDED COHORTS FOR...

A SUNDAY IN THE PARK ~~WITH~~ AGAINST GEORGE


BUSH LIES!
DO YOU FEEL SAFER?
DARN GOOD LIAR
KERRY
STOP WAR
MEDIA LIED PEOPLE DIED!
NO DRAFT
WHO WOULD JESUS BOMB?
PEACE
BUCK FUSH!
STOP BUSH
VOTE
DUMP BUSH
POINTILLISTS FOR PEACE!
(After threatening to arrest marchers rallying up in the Park the Mayor finally welcomed those who were bound to show up because it was off-limits—thus cleverly insuring that we'd bother few Republicans. They were going to shows on Broadway, where they were protected from riffraff by chorus lines of police on parade—a heckuva Show of Force.)


THE NEXT DAY I SHOWED UP AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN FOR...
A SEASON IN HECK!!
AT FIRST THE REPUBLICANS ACTUALLY LOOKED HUMAN... SORTA.
WE GOT GOD IN THE WHITE HOUSE. GOD!
YEW NEW YORKERS ARE LUCKY WE TOOK OUT SADDAM!
BUT THEY QUICKLY MORPHED INTO COLD-BLOODED REPTILES. THAT 19TH-CENTURY ELEPHANT SYMBOL IS WOEFULLY OUT OF DATE!
I KNOW THIS IS CRAZY— I WAS THERE AS A JOURNALIST!-BUT I COULDN'T BEAR TALKING TO MOST OF THE DELEGATES...
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M A KERRY FAN... IN BETTER TIMES I'D WANT A MORE LIBERAL CANDIDATE-A MEMBER OF MY OWN SPECIES.
IT'S JUST THAT, OUT OF BIOLOGICAL CLASS LOYALTY, WE NEED TO AT LEAST HAVE A MAMMAL IN THE WHITE HOUSE.
ON MY WAY TO THE GARDEN ON TUESDAY I SAW AGGRESSIVE COPS ARRESTING PEACEFUL KIDS NEAR BRYANT PARK...
WEDNESDAY I TRIED TO WATCH CHENEY ON TV, BUT HAD TO TURN TO A DVD MOVIE FOR ESCAPE. DIDJA EVER SEE GODZILLA (1998)? THE MONSTER LAYS ITS EGGS IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN AND SPAWNS A HORDE OF LITTLE GODZILLAS TO OVERRUN HUMANITY!
DAMN! I'VE GOTTA REMEMBER TO VOTE THIS NOVEMBER!
SO WHEN I HEARD ARNIE TALK ABOUT DEFENDING THE HOMELAND IN HIS CHEERFUL TEUTONIC ACCENT... I FLED!
OO-ESS-EY! OO-ESS-EY!
I GUESS I'M JUST A GIRLIE MAN. sigh.
FOOTNOTE:
ON THE LAST NIGHT, TO KEEP MY SELF-RESPECT I WORE A PROTEST SHIRT.
A SECURITY GUARD CAME TO MY SEAT.
STEP OUTSIDE, SIR!
HE NEEDED TO READ IT.
PRAY FOR A SECULAR FUTURE!
WELL, I GUESS I CAN LET YOU BACK IN...
WHEW! HE DIDN'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD "SECULAR"!
art spiegelman (DASHING TOWARD HIS DEADLINE WITH R. SIKORYAK)

PROFILES

THE GHOSTLY ONES

How Gillian Welch and David Rawlings rediscovered country music.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

David Rawlings told me Gillian Welch's life story. She had grown tired of telling it herself. Welch is a singer and songwriter whose music is not easily classified—it is at once innovative and obliquely reminiscent of past rural forms—and Rawlings is her partner. Welch describes them as "a two-piece band called Gillian Welch." I had asked her to talk about her past, and she demurred. Then she said, "Why don't you tell it, Dave." We were in Asheville, North Carolina; Welch and Rawlings were making a brief tour from Nashville, where they live. They were expected before long on the stage and had things to do to prepare, so I had to wait.

The next day, the three of us were in a car heading east to Carrboro, North Carolina, near Chapel Hill, where Welch and Rawlings had their next engagement. Rawlings was driving. Welch was lying on the back seat, with a blanket over her. It was early in the afternoon, and we were leaving the highway for a restaurant where they knew they could still order breakfast. Welch and Rawlings are nocturnal. A few years ago, they lived in a house that planes flew over. Whenever they tried to record themselves, the microphones picked up the planes. The planes stopped shortly after midnight and started again at six in the morning. The hours of quiet in the middle of the night were the ones they became accustomed to working in. They would take breaks and walk around the neighborhood at two and three in the morning, the only figures abroad. They developed the impression that Nashville was a peaceful city, free of traffic, a paradise, where music they loved had been made by people who now were dead but were completely alive whenever they sang on records.

At the restaurant—it was a Denny's—Welch asked for tea. "I don't need a tea bag, though," she said. The waitress regarded her steadily. A moment later, she placed a cup of hot water on the table, and Welch drew a tea bag on a string from her pocket. I thought it was too soon to ask again about her childhood, so I asked Rawlings about his. He grew up in Slatersville, Rhode Island, he said, a former mill town with a river. The mills were textile mills, built on the riverbanks, and they had been allowed to become dilapidated. Rawlings spent a lot of his childhood walking through them. At a friend's suggestion, he began playing guitar in 1985, when he was fifteen. "He was going to ask his parents for a harmonica for Christmas, and he wanted me to ask mine for a guitar," Rawlings said. "That way, we could learn to play and perform at the school talent show, in May." Rawlings pursued a kid who was known as a guitar player for help, and then the boy's father, who had taught guitar. Rawlings noticed that playing guitar "was something I was immediately passable at, or maybe even good at. Which wasn't the case with things such as basketball, which I tried really, really hard at, but it wasn't going to happen. Music, because it was math-based, and I was good at math, I wasn't intimidated." He and his friend learned "Heart of Gold," by Neil Young. They came in second at the talent show, and the next year they won.

Welch excused herself to visit the bathroom. When she came back, she said, "We've been here before."

Rawlings said, "Really?"

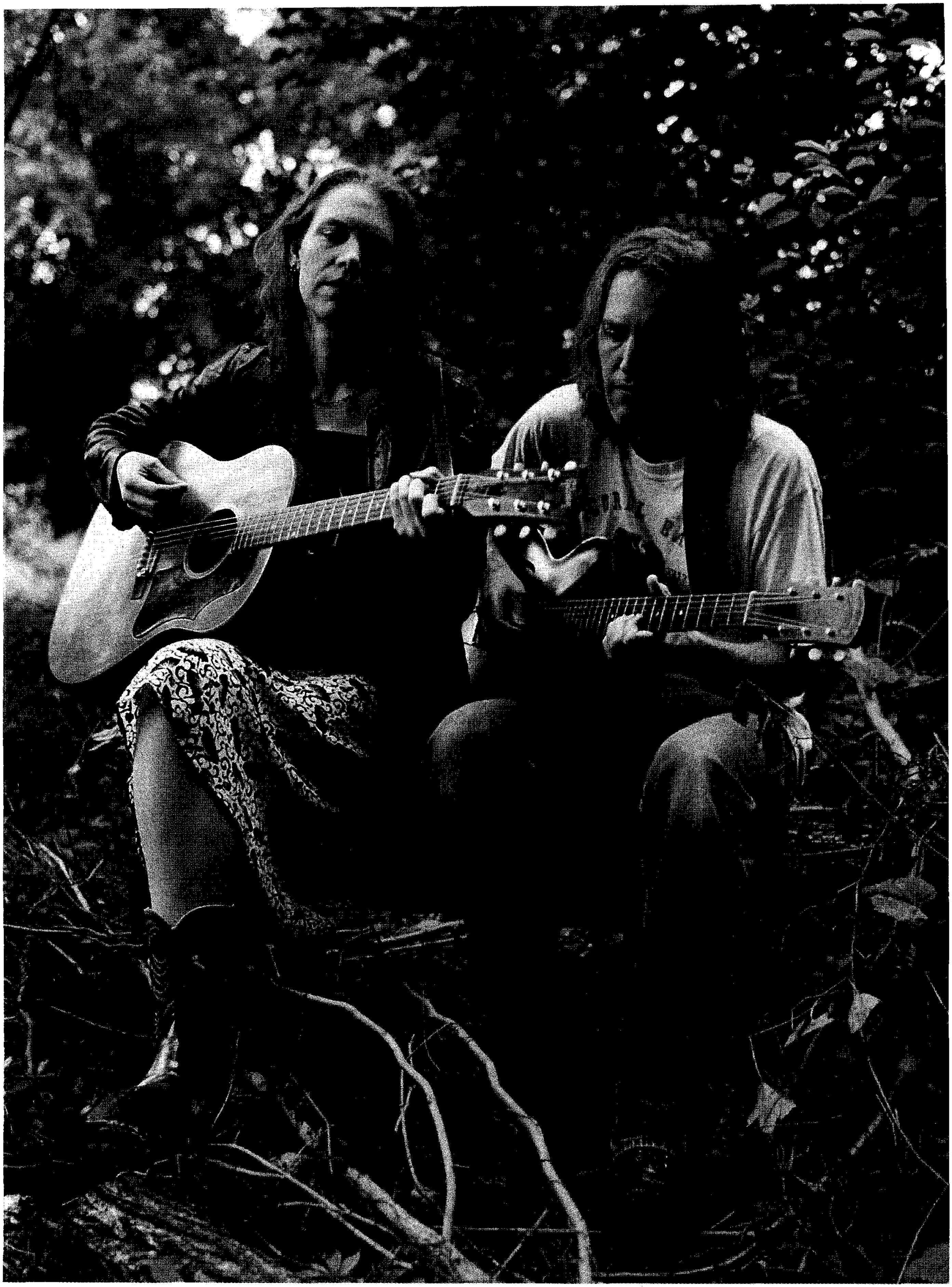
"This is the Denny's where they had the film crew," she said.

"The photographer who took the pictures for our third record, Mark Seliger, brought with him a friend who had film equipment," Rawlings said.

"In case we wanted to make a video," Welch said, sipping her tea.

"They came with a 16-mm. black-

The music Welch and Rawlings play is deceptive



mplex, despite its simple components: two voices, two guitars, and four hands. Photograph by Reuben Cox.

WAIT COORDINATOR
S. GROSS

and-white camera, and they filmed us at a club."

"Then we drove to Knoxville for a gig, and we stopped here for some food and shot a little film," she said. "They called the cops—state troopers—and they kicked us out."

Rawlings nodded.

"When I got up to go to the bathroom, I realized it's the same place," Welch said.

We paid the check, and when we got back in the car Rawlings seemed pensive. He tends to brood, and there is an obscurely mournful cast to his thinking. He drove slowly across the parking lot. "The problem with talking about the past is it becomes disturbing," he said finally. "You start thinking of a thousand anecdotes, and your life merely as a collection thereof."

Welch is tall and slender. She has a long, narrow face, high cheekbones, wide-set eyes, a sharp chin, and a toothy smile. She is thirty-six. Her skin is pale, and her hair is fine and reddish-brown. Her carriage is upright, and her movements are unhurried and graceful—her shoulders swing slightly as she walks. She collects hymnals, and handmade shoeshine kits, the kind from which people once made a living on the street. She is inclined toward practicality. As a child, she played the piano and the drums but gave them up because she didn't like being confined to whatever room the instruments were in. Onstage, during instrumental passages, she bends her head over her guitar, like a figure in a religious painting, and plays with a ruthless rhythmic precision. There is a sense of self-possession about her that seems more a matter of temperament than influence. Welch is adopted. Her mother, Mitzie, who is a singer, says she is surprised that Welch became a performer, because performers, in her experience, always have a need to please, and her daughter doesn't seem to.

Rawlings is tall and lanky. He has an oval face, a high forehead, dark hair, a long nose, and dark eyes. His hands are delicate. His manner in conversation varies between an austerity which gives him the air of a Pilgrim and a discursiveness in which he never seems satisfied with something he has said—any observation can always be delivered more emphatically or seen from another point of view or elaborated or clarified or even made more concisely. Because his mind is capacious and lively, his talk is nearly always diverting, but he wishes he were less garrulous. He says almost nothing onstage. He plays with his eyes closed and an impassive expression on his face. He stands on his toes and sways, all of which helps cultivate what Welch affectionately describes as "the Dave Rawlings mystique." One day after Rawlings and I had spent the afternoon listening to tapes of bands he had played in and of Welch's earlier work, and I had filled pages in my notebook with his remarks, he slumped in his chair. "I talk so much," he said ruefully. "I am more as I'd like to be when I'm very sick."

Welch and Rawlings's music is deceptively complex, despite its simple components: two voices, two guitars, and four hands. The broadest category into which it comfortably fits is country music. In the Country Music Hall of Fame, in Nashville, a video of Welch and Rawlings performing is shown with other videos that are intended to convey the breadth of modern country music. Welch and Rawlings are portrayed as defenders of a faith—old-time string musicians—practitioners of a lapsed form. They initially found a model for their enthusiasms in records made in the thirties and forties by musicians such as Bill and Earl Bolick, who performed as the Blue Sky Boys. Vocal duets unaccompanied by other musicians were eclipsed in the forties by the more forceful sound of bluegrass—the Blue Sky Boys broke up in 1951—leaving duets as one of the few forms of American music not yet completely covered with footprints. The music Welch and Rawlings play contains pronounced elements of old-time music, string-band music, bluegrass, and early country music, but Welch and Rawlings diverge from historical models by playing songs that are meticulously arranged and that include influences from rhythm and blues, rockabilly, rock and roll, gospel, folk, jazz, punk, and grunge. Furthermore, Welch prefers tempos that are languid. A typical Welch song has the tempo of a slow heartbeat.

Welch's narratives tend to be accounts of resignation, misfortune, or torment. Her characters include itinerant laborers, solitary wanderers, misfits, poor people plagued at every turn by trouble, repentant figures, outlaws, criminals, soldiers, a moonshiner, a farm girl, a reckless beauty queen, a love-wrecked woman, a drug addict, and a child. Her imagination is sympathetic to outcasts who appeal for help to God despite knowing from experience that there isn't likely to be any. Their theology is ardent and literal. They are given to picturing themselves meeting their families in Heaven, where mysteries too deep to comprehend will finally be explained. "Until we've all gone to Jesus / We can only wonder why," she sings in "Annabelle," a song about a sharecropper who hopes to give his daughter more than he had but who delivers her to the cemetery instead. A number of Welch's songs are written from the point of view of male characters. "My Morphine," the drowsy, intoxicated lament of a man whose addiction is souring, is the only song I am aware of about a narcotic which creates the sensation of having taken the narcotic. She is accomplished at compressing dramatic events into a few verses and a chorus. In "Caleb Meyer," a man appears, transgresses, dies, and is revived as a spectre in the imagination of the woman who slit his throat in self-defense. Welch admires the troubadour songwriters Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, and Hank Williams, and she writes good car songs. The first song she made big money from was "455 Rocket," which was a hit for Kathy Mattea in 1997, and is about a hot rod. More and more, Welch's songs describe her actual life. "No One Knows My Name" is about her birth parents. "My mother was just a girl seventeen," she sings, "and my dad was passing through, doing things a man will do." Her mother was a college student in New York, and her father was a musician. By the time she was delivered, her adoption had been arranged.

Welch was born in New York in 1967. Ken and Mitzie Welch already had a daughter, Julie, who'd been born in 1961. She and Welch are close; she lives in California, is a graphic designer, and also teaches improvisational comedy. Julie's birth had been difficult, and Mitzie wasn't eager to go through another pregnancy. According to Welch, when they approached adoption agencies "the agencies said no dice because they were entertainers." Ken Welch had been a performer since childhood, in Kansas City. He had begun piano lessons at four, but the teacher soon told his parents that she couldn't do more with him until his hands were large enough to span an octave. "I couldn't reach an octave on a piano, but I could on an accordion," he says. By the time he was seven, he was tap dancing and playing the accordion throughout "Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa, the remains of the old RKO circuit," he says. Eventually, he attended Carnegie Tech, now Carnegie Mellon, in Pittsburgh, where he studied painting. He met Mitzie at an audition. They moved to New York separately. She sold handbags at a store on Broadway, and made twenty-five dollars on Sundays singing in the choir at Norman Vincent Peale's church. She auditioned for Benny Goodman and got the job, but she had only a few weeks in which to learn Goodman's repertoire. She ended up writing lyrics on the palms of her hands and on her fingernails.

As the comedy team "Ken and Mitzie Welch," they appeared in clubs where Lenny Bruce also performed. Bob Newhart was once their opening act. They had their most public success on the "Tonight Show," when Jack Paar was the host. They performed a slowed-down version of "I Got Rhythm." Mitzie faced the audience and sang, and Ken stood with his back against hers, playing the accordion. By the time the Welches adopted Gillian, with the help of their doctor, Ken was writing music for television shows, and Mitzie was working in commercials and on Broadway.

When Welch was three, her parents moved to Los Angeles, to write music for "The Carol Burnett Show." As a little girl, Welch came home from school one day weeping because she had been reprimanded in art class for making a black outline around snow in a painting. This led her parents to enroll her in a school called Westland. At Westland, the students gathered every week to sing folk songs and Carter Family songs, with Welch accompanying them on guitar. "On the tapes from the period, she sounds the same as she does now, except that her voice is higher," Rawlings said.

Welch's parents bought songbooks for her, and, sitting by herself in her room, playing guitar, she made her way through them. When she got to the end, she wrote songs of her own, "about ducks and things," Rawlings said. "Like a kid who writes poems, and they go in a drawer." Welch attended a high school called Crossroads, "where I get way into ceramics and art and stay hours after school building things and they let me,"

Gahan Wilson

"He does it to you because you're hateful."

she said. "And I run like crazy—cross-country and track." Welch made the all-state team for the mile and was invited to run in the national trials. "But if I'd gone I'd have got my ass kicked," she said. "They were in Texas, and I didn't do well in hot weather. Really, my sport was cross-country. I discovered that the longer the race, the more I moved up in the field. I don't run that fast—I just go, very rhythmic. I'm endurance."

Welch said that her favorite English teacher had gone to Princeton, so she applied, without telling him. But when he heard that she'd been accepted he told her that she wouldn't be happy there, and she went to the University of California at Santa Cruz instead.

THE FINAL CALL

Is this the end of the world?
No, just the end
of the language that describes it.

So the end happens
but no one says anything.
It's a downturn, not a collapse,

an economist explains.
The pair of polite apostles ringing
my doorbell are in no rush to die.

In the literature of the last days
there are many typos.
Dead, dread, bread, take your pick.

Whoever is saying it's over
refuses to specify demands,
makes no ultimatums, it's just over.

Welch and Rawlings appear often on the Grand Ole Opry. They also perform in clubs in the United States and abroad, where their audiences tend to consist of between a thousand and two thousand people. They play very quietly. Welch sang so much by herself in her room that she never learned to sing above the sound of other musicians. Audiences at even the beeriest clubs attend them closely, as if they were at the theatre. Her voice resonates more in her head than in her chest. Its range is not wide—it is more an alto than a soprano—and it has a mournful, vernacular, almost factual quality, as if she were a witness to the scene she is describing. She conveys emotion through dynamics, not vibrato, and by a self-effacing absorption with the narrative. What ornamentation she employs comes mainly from bluegrass and brother-team singing—the pounce on certain syllables, the dying falls, the trills, the quick fades and returns, the small tear—though she manages, partly by the solemnity of her bearing, to give the impression of singing without artifice, which in itself is dramatic.

At Carrboro, Welch and Rawlings played in a club called Cat's Cradle. As on many nights of the tour, they shared the bill with the Old Crow Medicine Show, a charismatic, punked-up string band from Nashville. Rawlings sometimes plays with Old Crow. When he does, he is occasionally introduced as Butch Hobson. All of them shared a small dressing room. On the door, in permanent marker, was written, "I Hate This Part of Texas." Welch changed into a full skirt and a sleeveless velvet top. Then she sat on the edge of a small armchair and folded her skirt demurely between her knees and Ketch Secor, the fiddle player from Old Crow, brought out a shoeshine kit and polished her cowboy boots. "It's what the opening act does," he said, "shine the headliner's shoes."

Narrow stairs led to a sitting room in the wings above the stage. Morgan Jahnig, the bass player for Old Crow, came down the stairs and said, politely, "Does the name Jerzy Kosinski mean anything to anyone? It just came into my head."

Welch gathered her skirt and climbed the stairs and sat in a chair. On the pages of a small, lined notebook, she printed a set list in block letters. I went out into the club to listen to Old Crow. From the far corner of the floor, as if through a window, I could see Welch upstairs, seated in front of a mirror, brushing her hair, then turning her head from side to side until it fell to her liking.

Rawlings's account of Welch's past began shortly after we left Denny's. Welch had settled herself on the back seat and said, "I'm still waiting to hear the Gillian Welch story, by David Rawlings." We had arrived at her departure for Santa Cruz when Rawlings paused, as if he had something delicate to impart. "At this point, her family," he said, "they've kept her on a pretty tight leash."

"No boyfriends," Welch said.

"She goes to U.C. Santa Cruz, and when do you start playing in bands?"

"Soon as I get there," Welch said. "The first one was called Penny Dreadful, a Goth band, because that's what my friends were playing. I was very pale, and my hair was very blond from being from California and in the sun all the time. I'm on a bass I borrowed. It doesn't last very long. I was not a real creative force in that band."

"At college, though, things deteriorate pretty quickly," Rawlings said thoughtfully. He paused again. "I don't know, Gill," he said, looking opaquely out the windshield at the road. "How accurate do you want this to be?"

"Accurate," she said.

"O.K.," Rawlings said. "So Gill's getting drunk and taking drugs all the time."

"I immediately spin out," Welch said.

"After a very cloistered life," he said.

"I hadn't been a very social person in high school," she said. "I kept to myself. I had friends, but college is so different. You arrive and whatever you want to be

What kind of language is that?
Analysts are antic with interpretation,
think tanks are flooding with thoughts.

The global information network
backs up the data, streams them up
to one of Jupiter's moons.

The ram's horn heralds
our coming from the hills.
We're enslaved by that sound.

We're called to parasail
from hilltops into the open air
where we verify and counterpunch.

Ah, another soft landing.
Though this time a rather large sheet of sky
tangles and trails down after us.

—*Ron Slate*

you are. The question is, who do you want to be?"

"There are other bands," Rawlings said, as if to return Welch's attention to the story.

"I was the drummer in a psychedelic surf band, Thirteenth-Floor something or other," Welch said. "I don't think we had a singer. We probably had only a handful of gigs, and most of them were house parties. I was always extremely high on acid, and I wouldn't realize that the song had ended, so there were a lot of drum solos."

Welch took classes in art and ceramics and became interested in photography. She moved into a house whose other tenants were members of a bluegrass band that played at a pizza parlor, and she went to all their gigs. "When I discovered bluegrass music, it was like an electric shock that it meant so much to me," Welch said. "I hadn't heard people playing the music I had sung as a kid, and it made me think, I know these songs, and I sound good singing them. I realized this was possible."

"Do you start performing?" I asked.

"A couple of gigs, and they scare me to death."

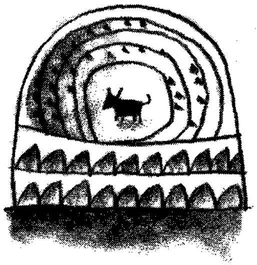
"And how are they received?"

"Well, I don't think I was singing very loud, and there was no mike," she said. "I sort of go and play them, but everything about how I look says, 'Pay no attention to me.' "

When Welch and Rawlings sing together, their voices fit so tightly that they seem welded. One of their newer songs—it doesn't yet have a title—is almost hypnotically slow and includes several passages sung in unison. Welch says that sometimes she loses the sense of which voice is hers and which belongs to Rawlings.

Rawlings's ear for harmonic possibilities is impish. He does not always match Welch's phrasing. His line sometimes anticipates what Welch is singing, then meets hers and continues in another direction. He likes intervals that are closer than those commonly used. At certain moments of tension, their voices seem to be leaning against each other, like cards in a card house, which is a bluegrass effect.

Rawlings is a strikingly inventive guitarist. His solos often feature daring melodic leaps. He uses passing tones as signal elements of a solo rather than relying on them merely to bridge chord changes, and there is an obstinate, near-vagrant quality of chromatic drifting to his playing—of his proceeding with harmonic ideas at a different pace and perhaps even in a different direction from the song's changes. He uses double and triple stops and open strings for dramatic effect. Often, he leaves an open string ringing as a drone against which he plays a note that conflicts with the chord the drone refers to. He likes to go as far out on a limb as he can before figuring out how to get back. In Carrboro, he played a solo that seemed as if it were going to skid right off the pavement and recovered itself only at the very last moment. The crowd applauded the simple audacity, and a woman beside me, clearly familiar with his playing, began laughing and shaking her head. "Of course he ends it there," she said to her companion. "Why wouldn't he?" In the dressing room afterward, I asked Rawlings how he would describe his playing, and he said that he simply has a fondness for certain notes and he finds ways to play them. When I asked which notes they were, he shrugged and said, "The ghostly ones."



Rawlings plays a peculiar guitar. It is a 1935 Epiphone Olympic, with an arch top, and f-holes on the face, like a violin, and even when it was new it was a cheap guitar. He may be the only musician who has ever made it his principal instrument. The sound is so unusual that, once when Welch and Rawlings were appearing at a festival where the blind guitar player Doc Watson was also performing, Watson came up to Rawlings while he was warming up and said, "Son, what kind of instrument is that?" In 1997, Rawlings bought a Fender Esquire, an electric guitar, and wanted to use it, so he and Welch got a friend to play drums, and Welch played the electric bass and they began playing clubs as the Esquires. They never announced their performances, and not many people came. They played songs by Neil Young and the Rolling Stones, among others, and Rawlings sang most of them. The Esquires brought to their gigs a complete book of Dylan songs, and once during each evening the audience was allowed to shout out a number. Welch and Rawlings picked one, then turned to the corresponding page in the Dylan book and played whatever song was on that page. Rawlings says that, for the most part, their playing was "a two on a scale of ten." They last played in 2002.

"The Esquires' big gig was New Year's, because no one would ever hire me and Dave to play New Year's," Welch said. "So we were always free."

The most compelling element of a Welch and Rawlings performance is their deep and, so far as I know, unexampled engagement with each other. Welch's mother and father once asked me if I had ever seen Welch and Rawlings rehearse. I said that I hadn't. "Whatever happens in the ear to people listening profoundly to each other is happening in an extreme fashion between them," he said.

"You know not to interrupt," she said.

"There's a kind of supersensitivity," he said.

"And respect," she said.

"It's like they're breathing together," he said. "They get lost in there."

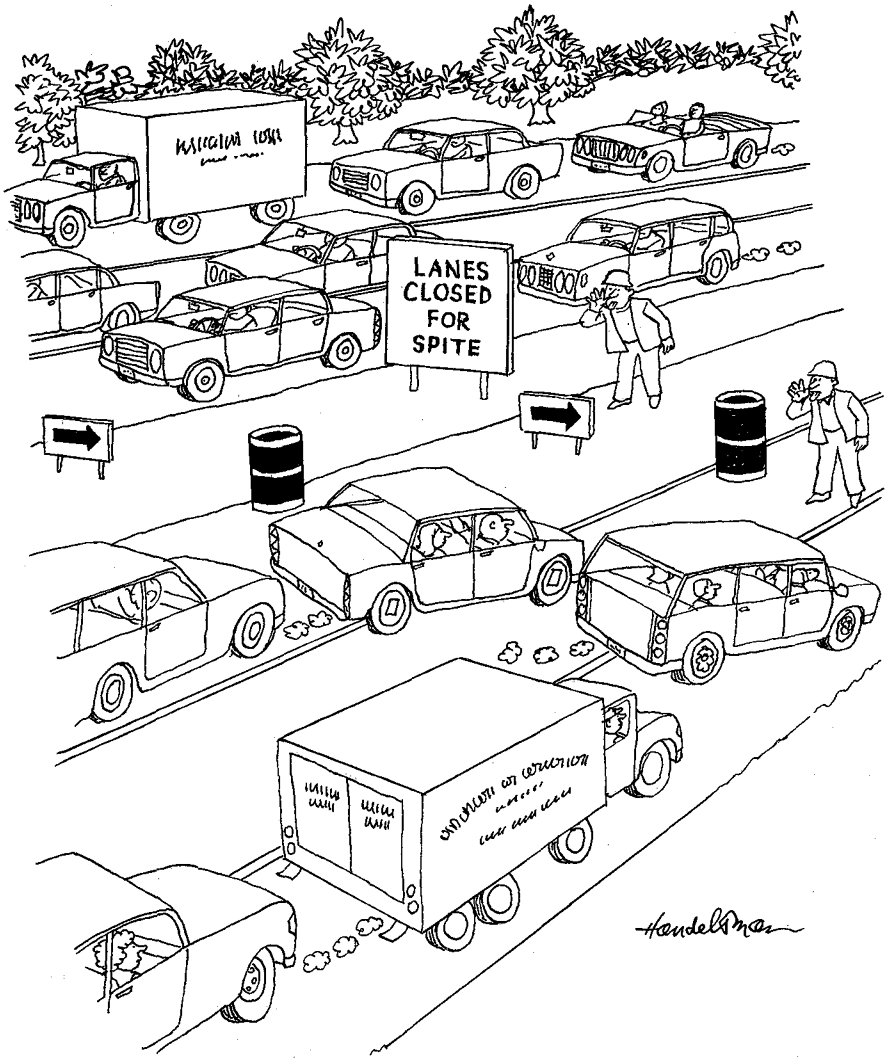
"We were a little scared," she said.

Parked along the side of the highway here and there on the way to Carrboro were white school buses with "Inmate Transfer Bus" written in black letters beneath the windows, and around the buses were convicts in prison clothes picking up trash. "In the meantime, you're in another band," Rawlings said to Welch.

"Campy seventies covers, which is very funny to do, in my opinion," Welch said. "Late Elvis, Neil Diamond."

"The band's name is Sofa."

"And everyone in it has a persona," Welch said. "I was Oprah von Sofa. Hal, the drummer, worked at a Goodwill sorting station, so he had access to all this wild, psychedelic clothing that people were finally getting rid of. Plaid pants and vinyl belts. I wore my hair in pigtails. It spilled over into my real life. If you've got such great clothes, you don't just want to wear them onstage, and likewise the names. A lot of people just knew me as Oprah. It was very helpful to me to have a costume and an alter ego. In Sofa, I'm sometimes on bass and sometimes on guitar. The bluegrass band moved out of the house, and Sofa moved in. This is the band I actually start doing gigs with. We make a demo, we have posters, we're a slightly working band."



"Then the next thing, Gill's done with that life, and she's going to live in Wales," Rawlings said.

"The earthquake hit in '89," Welch said. "I was up on campus when it happened, and as I made my way home things got stranger and stranger. People were trapped in their houses, because the roofs had collapsed, chimneys had fallen, cars were smashed under trees, and water mains had broken. They stood on their lawns with their radios on, so you could hear more than one as you passed. By the time I reached home, I was completely shaken up. My bedroom wall was like a spiderweb. In the days after, people couldn't sleep. My best friend, who lived in San Francisco, said, 'You should get out.' We arranged to house-sit for a woman in Wales. We were maybe going to travel around and take pictures."

"But it's a little quiet," Rawlings said.

"We were very out of place," Welch said. "After a couple of months, we got a little bored, then we realized that we had the use of this woman's car. This whole thing ends up in Amsterdam."

"And then there's a conference with her parents, who have long sensed that things are going to need attention," Rawlings said.

"They ask me what do I want to do, and I say, 'I want to do music.' "

"And they say, 'If you're going to play music you're going to have to go to school for it.' "

"Which is funny, because they didn't."

In 1990, a friend of Welch's parents wrote a recommendation for her to the Berklee College of Music, in Boston.

"Her parents make the situation happen. But on the other hand it's in Boston, so they don't have that much control," Rawlings said.

"Just come back to the story," Welch said.

"All right. So Gill goes to Boston, and of course she's useless at Berklee."

"It's a jazz school."

"And she's a primitive."

"I felt like a Martian," she said. "I'm out of my peer group. I have no friends. I'm in my room listening to brother-team music."

"One of her teachers looks at the way she makes a C chord and says, 'If you keep doing that you'll be a cripple in a few years.' But she stays for two years and majors in songwriting, and the songwriting program is just starting to flower."

Welch and Rawlings began going out with each other at Berklee. They met in a hallway, while waiting to audition for the country-band class. At Berklee, Welch overcame her shyness about performing, she said, "because you had to. In every class, you had to do things in front of about twenty people."

When school was over, Welch said, "I looked at my record collection and saw that all the music I loved had been made in Nashville—Bill Monroe, Dylan, the Stanley Brothers, Neil Young—so I moved there. Not ever thinking I was thirty years too late." At the end of the summer, Rawlings moved to Nashville, too. In Boston, when they played together, they were always among other musicians. In the kitchen of Rawlings's apartment one night, they heard for the first time what they sounded like on their own. "We sang 'Long, Black Veil,' and we stopped," Welch said. "I think we were both a little startled by how natural a blend we were. If you don't sound good together, you can't make it better."

Welch decided that if she wanted a career as a songwriter she would have to make the weekly rounds of songwriters' nights at the clubs. Rawlings was working with other musicians, but he agreed to go with her. "Just sort of to accompany me because you have to sit there and wait, and it's not a good time," she said. When they began arranging her songs, they realized that, "instead of the Stanley Brothers or the Blue Sky Boys, or any of the brother acts we've listened to—lead singers and a tenor—we have a difference," Welch said. "We have a lead singer and a baritone singer." Because Welch was intent on establishing herself as a songwriter, and because their arrangement began informally, and Rawlings was playing with other people anyway, she says it didn't occur to them to name the duet; they performed simply as Gillian Welch.

POT ROAST
KOREN

"We want organic, we want local, and we want cruelty-free."

Almost from the start, people tried to separate them. After about a year, Welch found a manager, Denise Stiff. "I must have had a hundred people say to me, 'Lose the guitar player,' " Stiff said. Rawlings draws too much attention from Welch, they said. Or, he plays twenty notes where ten will do. Or, with a band behind her she could be the next Alison Krauss. As it happened, Stiff represented Krauss, a bluegrass musician, and cared less about having a duplicate of her than she did about trying to discover what Welch and Rawlings required.

For a while, Welch made beds and cleaned bathrooms at a bed-and-breakfast. "That was a good job for me," she said. "You can't listen to the stereo, because you're moving from one room to another, and the vacuum is too loud; there's no entertainment, so you have to provide it. I would write. Plus, I had a forty-minute drive there and back, and I have always been able to write when I'm driving, if I'm by myself." She brought home tablecloths and napkins to iron. She and Rawlings lived in the same apartment building, and sometimes, if Rawlings needed money, he did some ironing, too.

In 1994, Welch signed a publishing deal, and then devoted herself to trying to get a record contract. Her publisher sent tapes of her and Rawlings to Jerry Moss, at Almo Sounds, in Los Angeles, and in 1995 Stiff and Welch went to L.A. to see him. Welch played for him in his office. Behind his desk, Moss began quietly singing harmony with her. When Stiff heard him, she thought, Those are David's parts. Jerry's heard them on the tapes, and if he's singing them he's missing them. She never again felt uncertain about Rawlings's role. Even so, once Welch and Rawlings were signed to a recording contract the question they heard most often was "Who are you going to get to play guitar on your record?"

One afternoon in Nashville, after the tour had been completed, Welch picked me up at my hotel. I had asked her if she would show me the clubs where she and Rawlings had played Writer's Nights. Welch had

"Can I do anything for you besides sending over the wine steward?"

written down the names of all the clubs she remembered, and we drove back and forth—it felt as if we were tacking across town. There were twelve altogether, and it took us about an hour and a half to visit them.

"How you'd find them is look in the paper," she said. "If it wasn't a highbrow place, the ad simply said 'Writer's Night,' and if it was a highbrow place you'd see the names of all the writers booked.

"One night, I walked around with the cigar box collecting the money, because there was no one at the door, which says something about how determined I was—do you think our show was worth the money?"

At the end of a side street was a small, two-story brick building with a little sign that said "Pub of Love." "Tuesday nights," Welch said. "Probably forty people." Down by the river, near the Ryman Auditorium, where the Grand Ole Opry was, we stopped in front of a building where there used to be a club called the Silver Dollar Saloon. "One time I came down here to a Writer's Night by myself," Welch said. "November '93. Dave has travelled back to New England for Thanksgiving, and I'm here by myself. This night, I'm late, and the guy grudgingly puts me on the list. 'We've got a lot of people,' he says. He works his way through the writers. I'm waiting. The crowd's thinning out. Once the writers play, they leave, and whoever came to see them, their friends, they leave, too. Finally, it gets to be about eleven-thirty, maybe coming up to midnight. The bartender and me are left. The guy says to me, as he's leaving, 'Will you turn off the sound system when you're done?'

"Most of the things that might have been discouraging have their pathetic and funny sides, too," Welch said. "Usually, it was all right. No one kicked me out. They would listen, but they would always say, 'Don't you have any happy love songs?' "

From the old Silver Dollar Saloon, we drove to a part of town called Green Hills. "We're heading for the Bluebird Café, where you'll laugh when you see it, because it's in a strip mall," Welch said. The Bluebird was behind plate-glass windows. We stood on the sidewalk and leaned into the glass, shading our eyes. The room was dark. I could make out some black-and-white photographs of songwriters on a panelled wall, and chairs stacked on tables. "The Bluebird was very important in our coming-up," Welch said. "It was the scene of where I got signed for my writing deal, actually." She moved a step to the side and pointed. "Right there," she said. "Over by the cigarette machine."

Welch is a figure of some controversy, and she wishes she weren't. Some people like to say that as the daughter of musicians in Los Angeles she has no right to play music they regard as reserved for people who grew up in poverty or, anyway, among laborers.

In response, Rawlings likes to bring up Ernest Hemingway. "You read 'The Old Man and the Sea,' and you like it," he says. "Then you find out that not only is the man who wrote it not a commercial fisherman, he isn't even a Cuban. Do you not like it now?" Assertions about who belongs in the academy and who doesn't are always partisan, but in Welch's case none can be made confidently. There are complications that involve the issue of identity in a fundamental and enigmatic way. Welch says that the first time she heard bluegrass music she felt stirred as she never had by any other music. She has said that it makes no sense that she plays relic music deeply influenced by a part of the country she did not live in until she was grown. More than a few of her songs, for example, have the harsh modal structure of the ballads sung in the mountains of North Carolina in the nineteenth century. Her reaction might plausibly reflect her having sung folk songs as a girl and played the guitar at school, and a pleasure that surfaced when she was reminded of it—a sense memory, that is. In any case, to explain the anomaly posed by the difference between her upbringing and her tastes she has told interviewers, somewhat sheepishly, that she has wondered whose blood runs through her veins. She has even considered which musicians might have passed through New York in 1967. She has imagined her father as Bill Monroe, the founder of bluegrass, or as Levon Helm, the drummer in the Band, who was from Arkansas. After all, the first instrument she played was the drums, and now and then she still plays them.

Welch's parents claimed her the day after she was born, and, honoring rules imposed on the adoption, they sent a friend to the hospital to collect her. Over the years, they have learned two things about Welch's mother and father, which they told Welch while she was visiting last Christmas. Her father was not from the South, so far as they knew, but he was a musician; in fact, he was a drummer. And, from an address they had been given, it appeared that her mother, the college student in New York, may have grown up in the mountains of North Carolina.

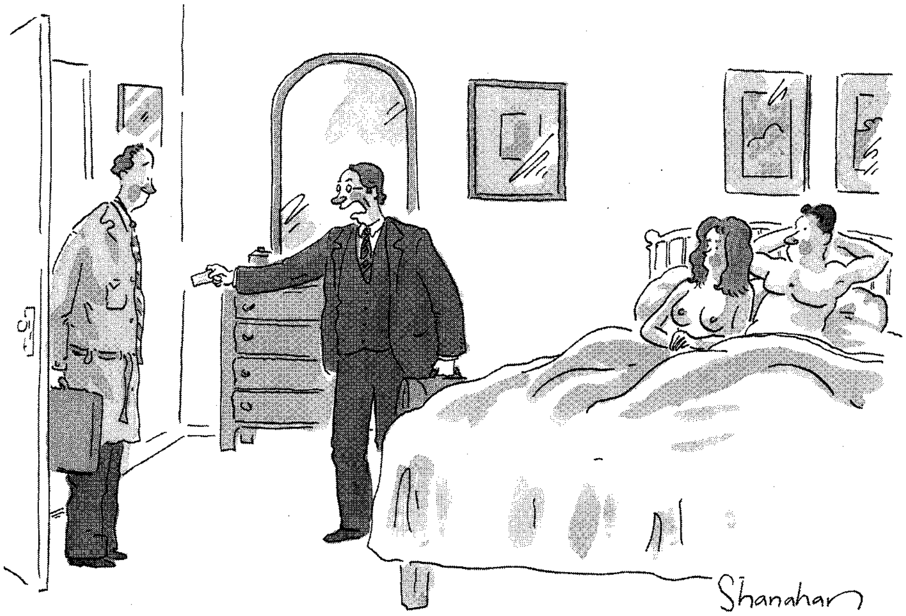
When Welch and Rawlings arrived in Nashville, they each bought an old pickup truck. Rawlings spent all the money he had come to town with on his. When I asked Welch what kind of truck she had bought, she said, "A 1966 F-100 with a 352 motor, three on the tree, and an eight-foot bed—you could put a whole sheet of plywood in it." Rawlings drives a farm truck from an orange grove in California. It was inherited by someone in Nashville. The California sun dissolved the finish, so the truck is several colors, mainly orange, green, and gray. It looks as if it were covered with lichen. Welch said, "It's a one-piece body, which was a bad idea. If you throw something too heavy in the bed, you can't open the door; it torques."

My last night in Nashville, I went with Welch and Rawlings to a steak house for dinner, and afterward Rawlings drove us to a soft-ice-cream place on Charlotte Avenue, in Sylvan Park, near the house they had lived in where the airplanes flew overhead. Welch was wearing black jeans and a sleeveless black top, her hair was loosely pulled back, and she had a radiant look. On the way, she sang along with the truck's tube radio, which was playing a Connie Francis song. When Francis hit a high note and her voice broke slightly, Welch applauded the effect. Pat Pattison, Welch's songwriting teacher at Berklee, once said to me, "One of the things that Gillian did very well was sing the song rather than the notes. You have singers who have a really great instrument, but you don't feel they're inside the song. When Gillian sings, it's about the presentation of emotion. Even back then, she didn't sing notes; she sang feelings and ideas."

By the time we arrived at the ice-cream place, it was closed. The owner happened to see us through the service window. He knew Welch and Rawlings, and he waved. He, too, was a musician.

Welch and Rawlings ordered cones dipped in chocolate, and while we waited for them Welch said there was a path that led from the back of the parking lot through an alley to their old house. The house was damp and dark, and the rooms were laid out shotgun fashion. It was on Nevada Avenue, she said, and they called it the Spaceship Nevada, because the atmosphere inside, with the recording machines and the cables and microphones, was remote from ordinary life. Across the street from the ice-cream place was a brick building with signs all over it saying "Whiskey," some of them flashing. Welch said that the tricky thing about working at night was getting to bed before the birds started singing.

The owner handed the cones through the window, and Welch told Rawlings, "I took your advice and had the first bite before the chocolate had dried." To me, she said, "Because it's different every time—it's the humidity, and how the chocolate settles." I wrote that down, because it seemed to typify an acuity of mind that she and Rawlings share. A few days later, I was talking to Welch's mother on the phone. Julie Welch, Gillian's sister, had told me that when Gillian was in high school a television station did a program called "Super Kids," in which they included Gillian as an example of a student who excelled at everything she did. I asked Welch's mother if she remembered the program. "Oh, sure. She was unique. I mean, her lyrics, where does that stuff come from?" she said. "The funny thing is, she got all these awards in school, but I never remember her working that hard. She just sort of loved everything she did." She paused, as if reflecting. "I always think of Gill as paying attention," she said. "Really, what she's done her whole life is pay attention." ♦

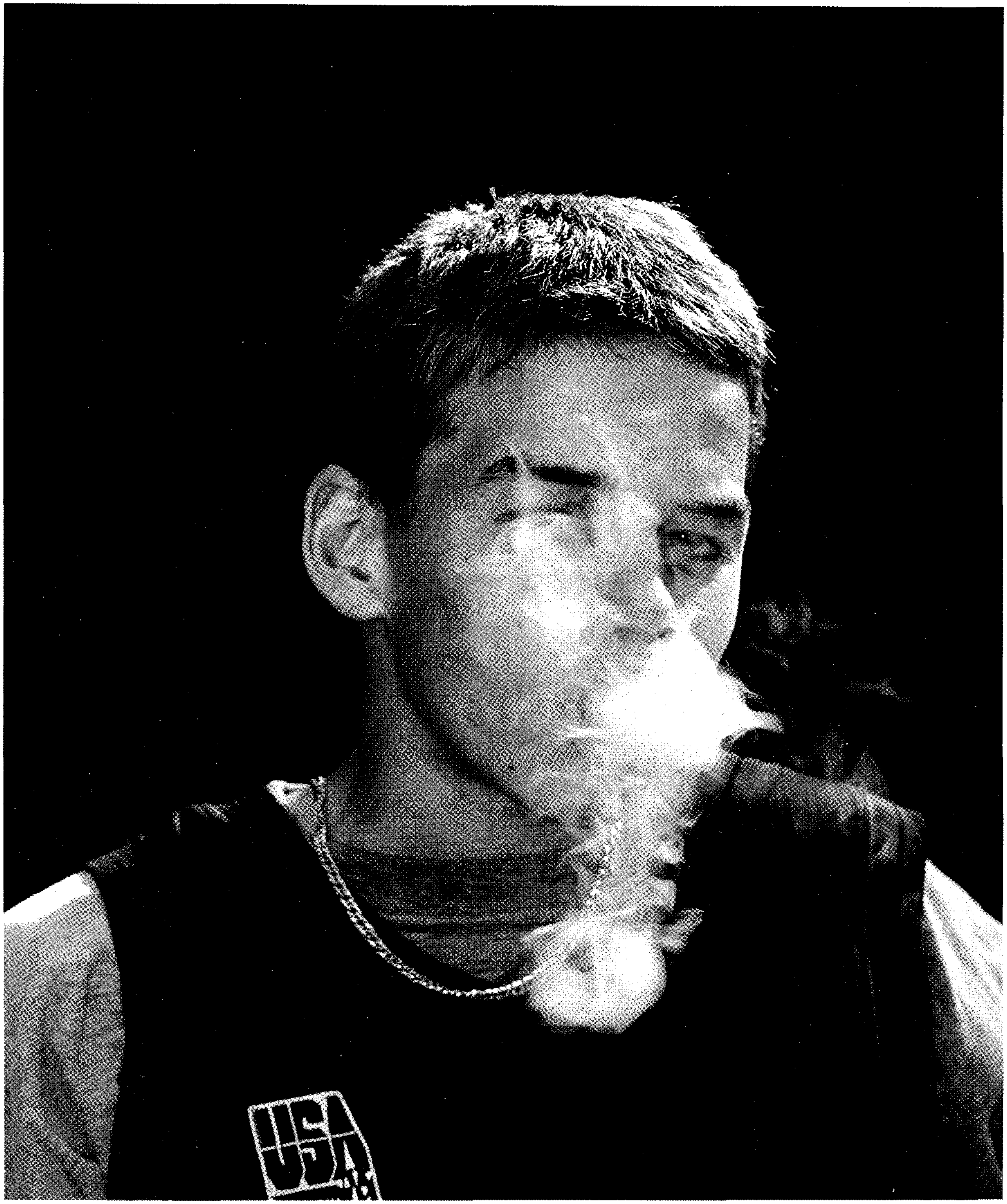


"Your wife! Your best friend! Their attorney!"

FICTION

SPIDER BOY

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES



"There are places in the world where people vanish."

His father had said this. His father had spoken flatly, without an air of mystery or threat. It was not a statement to be challenged and it was not a statement to be explained. Later, when he had not seen his father for a long time—or what seemed to him a long time, months, or maybe just weeks—he would try to summon the words again, exactly as his father had uttered them, but by this time he'd become uncertain, anxious. Had he said, Where people vanish, or where people *can* vanish?

It was such a crucial distinction!

"Remember your new name. Think before you answer. Not just 'What's your name?' but any question. It helps to lick your lips. That will give you time not to make a mistake you can't unmake." His mother smiled. She had had her hair cut and restyled and she had a new way of clasping, her shaky left hand in her more forceful right hand, at waist level, as a practiced tennis player might clasp a racquet.

Yet it was not his name but his surname that was at issue. For his surname had been so disgraced that he had come to feel a certain fascination with its forbidden sound—the elided consonants and vowels, the lift of its final syllable in an expression of (possibly mocking) surprise, like an arched eyebrow. In private, Philip spoke his old name aloud, mimicking the newscasters who gave to it an air of intrigue and reproach. Sometimes at night, in bed in his new room in his grandparents' house, he pressed his face deeply into the pillow and spoke the forbidden name, each syllable equally and defiantly stressed—*Szaar-ra*. He spoke the name until his breath ran out and his lungs ached and through his body raced a half-pleasurable panic that he had to smother.

A pillow. Where his mouth was, wet with saliva. A pillow is a comforting thing when your head rests on it, but if you are lying on your back and a pillow is pressed against your face you cannot summon the strength to push it away and save yourself.

"Yes. We've moved out of state." Before even the impeachment hearings his mother had filed for divorce. And before she'd filed for divorce she'd moved them—Emily, Philip, herself—into her parents' big stone house overlooking the Hudson River in Nyack, New York.

Now it was a drive of several hours to their old house in Trenton, overlooking the Delaware River. On the map, that distance was not really very far, but there was an air of finality in his mother's frequently repeated phrase: "Out of state."

Out of state caught in Philip's mind, uttered in his mother's breathless, adamant tone. As you might say *Out of space, out of time.*

Out of danger, out of harm.

Out of toxic contagion.

In this new state it was essential to have a new name, to replace and nullify the old, disgraced name—quickly!—before Emily and Philip were enrolled in their new schools.

Nyack Academy for Emily, who was fifteen and in her second year of high school, Edgerstoune School for Philip, who would be thirteen in August and entering eighth grade. In New Jersey both children had gone to the Pennington School, in a northern Trenton suburb. Sometimes their mother drove them to school, sometimes one of their father's assistants. There was also a private bus provided by the school, the same bright-pumpkin hue as public-school buses but only a third the size. Riding on this bus, brother and sister never sat together, and had acknowledged each other only politely, with diffident smiles.

For a few weeks during the impeachment hearings they'd continued to attend the Pennington School, but when criminal charges were brought against their father their mother had removed them from school.

"It has to be done. They can't be made to suffer for him. They are only children."

In Nyack, it became official: Where *Szaara* had been, now there was *Hudgkins.*

Where *Philip Szaara* had been, now there was *Philip Hudgkins.*

This wasn't a "new" new name, of course. It was their Nyack grandparents' name, with which their mother insisted they had only happy associations. Their mother took up her maiden name with relief. During the sixteen years of her marriage to the New Jersey politician Roy Szaara, she had continued to be known to certain of her women friends, with whom she'd gone to Bryn Mawr, as Miriam Hudgkins. And so: "It isn't a great change. It's more like coming back home."

Spider Boy. You might have thought that the name was a playful reference to the comic-strip superhero Spider-Man, but in fact Philip had no interest in Spider-Man, just as he had no interest in any of the comics, action films, and video games that so captivated other boys.

"Spider Boy."

Saying it aloud was a way of evoking the haunting and powerful presence that existed now only in memory. If it weren't for a single memento (smelly, ugly, of a clumsy size, and in no way to be mistaken for something of Philip's own), which he kept in a secret place in his room, Philip might have begun to wonder whether Spider Boy had ever existed.

And yet he vividly remembered the effort of smiling. And a strange sensation in his jaws. His voice like a girl's voice, weak and disappointing. He'd had to repeat his words so that Spider Boy could hear them amid the traffic noises. He remembered jamming both hands into the pockets of his Pennington School jacket. He remembered that Spider Boy, panhandling in front of the Camden train station, had been standing in an odd posture—sexy-swaggering, you might say—one hand brashly extended palm up and the other, as if for ballast, clenched and shoved in a pocket of his filthy jeans.

Spider Boy was older than Philip by several years. He was taller by several inches. He had a shaved head and deep-set glassy-dark eyes. His jaws were covered in a darkish ghost beard. There was something twitchy, even spidery, about the way his arms jutted from his bony shoulders, and about his restless lanky legs. He wore a grungy black T-shirt and jeans torn at the knees. On his feet: splayed sneakers crudely mended with tape. The smallest toe of his left foot protruded through the rotted sneaker fabric like a wayward tongue.

Philip had never called him Spider

COLLIER SCHORR, "SMOKE RING" (1999)/303 GALLERY, NY/MODERN ART, LONDON

Boy, of course. At the time, he had not been capable of much more than *Excuse me*? and he'd been excited and anxious and taken by surprise when he'd seen with what eagerness the boy turned to him, a sudden flaring in the sunken eyes of something like hope.

Spider Boy. Philip wanted to feel revulsion for him. For then he would not feel a more tender emotion.

"But how would they know who you are?"

His mother laughed at him, not cruelly but in the way of a mother who loves her child no matter how silly, how mistaken, how annoying he is.

"Why, if you are exactly who you say you are, *Philip Hudgkins*, would anyone at your new school think that you are *not*?"

Philip hesitated. He frowned.

This was *squiggling up your face* in a way that exasperated his mother. Quickly he murmured yes, he guessed she was right, he was sorry.

Her eyes brimmed with the pain of their mutual hurt: "Oh, I know you don't mean it, honey. It's your nerves."

He supposed, yes. Calling it nerves was a way of reminding Philip that he was sensitive, like his mother. Not crude and cruel, manipulative and maneuvering, like his father.

Moreover, *nerves* were not his fault but the result of other people's behavior. The fault of the *circumstances of our lives*.

Yet it was *honey* that most reverberated in his ears. This, too, was a signal—that he was loved, as a child is loved, that he was not an adolescent boy but a child-boy, his mother's baby. He felt a pang of guilt at the sound of the word; he didn't deserve *honey*, just as he didn't deserve his mother's love. Soon he would outgrow it, as even his mother would have to acknowledge.

Philip's father hadn't called him *honey* in a long time. Using such baby names for a boy offended his father's sense of manly propriety. Instead, his father called him by his full, formal name, Philip. Mostly, though, when they were alone together or in the presence of a hitchhiker ("hitchhiker" was the term by which the boys were known) his father called him only *you*.

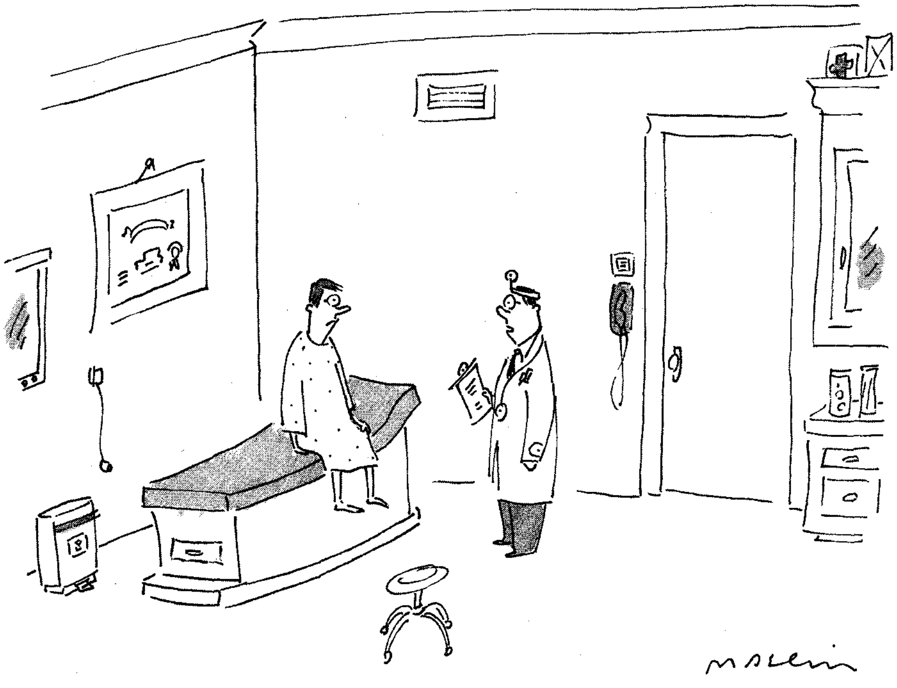
In the presence of hitchhikers his father had a way of speaking exuberantly yet guardedly. A way of laughing that made you want to laugh with him. He was likely to tousle Philip's hair and tease him the way you'd tease a younger child. He was more affectionate, squeezing Philip's arm at the elbow as he let him out of the car at the corner of State Street and Mercer, to return to the twelfth-floor apartment alone. "You've got a key, let yourself in. If I'm not back by twelve, don't wait up. I'll see you in the morning."

Sometimes, *Hey, you, be good*, and an impulsive kiss on the side of Philip's head, against his left temple, where a thin blue vein beat tremulously.

The headmaster, Dr. Simmons, made a point of saying hello to the new transfer student from Jersey whom most of his classmates ignored. *Hello* and *How are your mother and her family*, tactfully making no mention of any father living or dead. *How are you*, with a warm and encouraging smile, like someone greeting a convalescent. And Philip did his best to smile back and reply in emulation of his mother's telephone voice, never failing to include *sir*.

With the passage of months it became painfully clear to Philip that not only wasn't his identity suspected, he was also mostly invisible in the eyes of his classmates. If he was jostled by bigger boys it was only because he was there, a diminutive physical presence, to be jostled. He, Philip Hudgkins, a transfer student with a way of retreating even as he moved forward, held little appeal for those who might have wished, in other circumstances, to be cruel.

His teachers knew, Philip supposed. Though Dr. Simmons had promised not to tell anyone (or so Philip's mother insisted), still it seemed likely to Philip that they knew. In Nyack, in certain circles, there had to be some residual knowledge of the long linkage between Hudgkins and Szaara. Philip's mother wished not to recall the fact that she'd been married in Nyack and for sixteen years had brought her gregarious and attractive Republican rising-star husband home to visit her parents and to be introduced to their friends. How could this connection be nullified by her frantic efforts now? Worse yet, in midwinter, after months of quiet, *Szaara* headlines began to reëmerge, no longer confined to the New Jersey media but appearing in the Metro section of the *Times* as well. For the news had catapulted beyond charges of misconduct in political office, misuse of public funds, bribe-taking, and dealmaking into far more serious criminal charges of statu-



"You've got one foot in the grave. Further testing will determine if it's your left or your right."

tory rape, sexual assault upon a minor, abduction of a minor, and conspiracy to commit these crimes. Investigators for the state attorney general's office, wiretapping Roy Szaara's phones to gather evidence for his political misconduct, had been astonished to discover evidence for an entirely different category of criminal activity.

Several times that last summer, Philip and his father had gone camping at the Delaware Water Gap park, in northwestern New Jersey. That is, the intention had been to go camping there. In the back seat of his father's car were newly purchased sleeping bags, hiking boots, plastic bottles of Evian water, and packages of granola. A lightweight blanket from L. L. Bean, a pillow.

Philip's mother rarely asked about his weekends with his father.

"Your mother doesn't really give a damn about you any more than she does about me," his father said. "It's only pride with her, see. Her wounded class pride, her wish to scrape me off her shoes." His father chuckled and leaned over to kiss the side of Philip's head.

Roy Szaara had a large solid face, burnished like a coin. It was the face of a man much photographed. Laugh lines radiated from the corners of his eyes, which were clear, frank, and engaging. He had a razor-sharp part in his graying dark hair. For certain of his public appearances he wore makeup—inky-black mascara lightly brushed against his eyelashes.

For their trips to Chester, Pennsylvania, to South Philly and Camden, New Jersey, he wore tinted glasses in stylish metal frames. He whistled, he was in good spirits. He rarely spoke of his week at the state capitol except to tell Philip that things were going very well. He did not inquire after Philip's mother or sister. He had always shaved just before picking Philip up at the Pennington School, on Friday afternoons at 3:20 P.M. He smelled of aftershave and something sweet, like vanilla.

"Go over there. Poor kid, ask him if he wants a ride. If he's hungry."

It was the bus station at Chester. Or the Thirtieth Street railway station, in Philadelphia. Or the Camden train station. That last time, Philip's father had urged him from the car with a gentle nudge against his shoulder. Like a sleepwalker, but with unnaturally widened eyes, Philip had made his way past a noisy family loading their minivan to the boy panhandling listlessly at the curb.

He was a lone white boy whom no one gave more than a cursory glance. He stood with one hand extended palm up, stubborn and unmoving. There was something both childlike and feral about him that made Philip shy, so he was surprised when the boy looked at him eagerly, as if hoping he might know him.

"Excuse me? My dad and me, we're going to McDonald's for some hamburgers. You could come with us. Dad says."

These words had been programmed for Philip. Except for *Dad says*, which was his own invention.

Later, after they'd eaten, his father drove to Trenton to let Philip off at the apartment. It was late now, nearing 10 P.M., and Philip's head ached with exhaustion. He was in the back seat of the car and the boy, the hitchhiker, who'd said that his name was Reuben but had been coy about providing a last name, was in the passenger's seat beside Philip's father. Reuben was smoking a cigarette Philip's father had given him and he was talking loudly, boastfully. His speech was interlaced with *shit*, *suck*, *fuck*. At McDonald's, Reuben had wolfed down three Quarter Pounders, two orders of French fries, and a giant Coke. He had shocked Philip by belching loudly and without apology, as if making a witticism. The conversation had been mostly between Reuben and Philip's father, but Philip had not been hurt, or anyway not much hurt, for something similar had happened twice before in his father's company at other McDonald's with other starving hitchhikers, and each time Philip had consoled himself by thinking, *Dad wants him to feel special. He is someone to be pitied.*

It came out that Reuben was from Toms River, East Jersey. He'd "hung out" in Atlantic City for a while, then caught a ride to Philly, where he had contacts. He was headed for New York, he said, "eventually." When, at the corner of State Street and Mercer, Philip moved to climb out of the car, Reuben had looked surprised, asking wasn't he coming with them? But Philip's father had explained that Philip was too young for the place he wanted to take Reuben, the Café à Go-Go Bar & Lounge. Philip was much too young. Philip's father had laughed, and Reuben had laughed with him, exhaling a mouthful of smoke.

"You've got the key. Don't wait up. Good night!"

Philip hid inside the vestibule and watched his father drive away with Reuben. Now he felt a stab of jealousy, but he knew that, the next day, Reuben would be gone and he would have his father to himself. It was the new Acura his father was driving, a sedan with a beautiful pale-bronze finish. Roy Szaara always drove new cars, which he leased. Philip had seen the admiration in the boy's eyes as they'd approached the Acura. Now he watched as it moved back into State Street traffic. Soon it disappeared in a stream of glittering cars headed for the bridge over the Delaware River.

Next day, the pillow was gone from the back seat of the car, though the rest of the camping gear remained. Philip wondered if it was in the trunk of the car. Or if his father had thrown it away.

Before Spider Boy, there had been Fat Boy, and Baldie. There had been Luis, and Smoke.

When Philip asked his father where the hitchhikers had gone, his father laughed and tousled his hair and said, "There are places in the world where people vanish."

Later, Philip's father explained that the hitchhikers were a secret between him and Philip that no one must ever know. Did Philip promise to keep this secret?

Yes. Philip promised.

Because the hitchhikers were boys who'd broken the law. They were boys "wanted" by the law for juvenile crimes and very likely they would have been sent to juvenile-detention facilities—"juvey hall," as it was called—if Philip's father had not acted to prevent this. He'd convinced them to return to their homes. He'd given them the money to return by bus. He'd listened as they called their parents and he'd insisted on getting on the phone to explain who he was and what the situation was. "These are lost boys needing to be found," he said.

Sometimes, in the apartment, Philip

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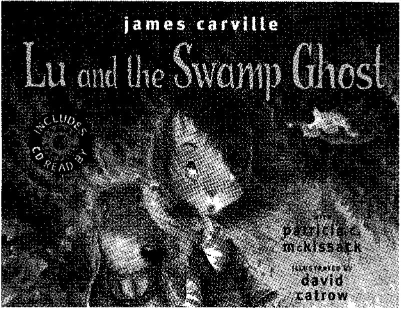
bookmarks

"Here's hoping Carville's momma told him some more stories for Catrow to illustrate."
-*Kirkus Reviews*



In *Lu and the Swamp Ghost*, political consultant and best-selling author James Carville teams up with award-winning children's book author Patricia C. McKissack to create a story about lending a helping hand. The book is based on an episode in the life of Carville's mother, Lucille (known as "Miz Nippy"), who grew up in rural southern Louisiana during the Great Depression.

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discovered things that the hitchhikers had left behind: soiled socks and underwear, crumpled cigarette packages, a single sneaker mended with duct tape. A plastic belt patterned to resemble crocodile skin. A sweat-stained baseball cap. Once, his father came up behind him to snatch a filthy undershirt Philip had been holding. Harshly, he laughed. "For shame. Your mother should keep you cleaner."

For a long time those words had reverberated in his ears with a ring of playful reproach. He was a fastidious boy who washed his hands often and had a compulsion to brush his teeth immediately after eating, for he could not bear the sensation of food particles between his teeth. Over time, he would come to believe that the filthy undershirt had in fact been his and he was flooded with a deep shame, for his father had seen it, and his father, too, would remember.

Spider Boy was a secret and would remain a secret. He had promised.

Oh, but he'd done a bad thing, a thing that his father would not have liked. For his father trusted him, and Philip had violated that trust. He'd taken with him, wrapped in his own underwear in the rucksack he brought his things in, the single sneaker mended with duct tape, a badly torn, stained and foul-smelling gunmetal-gray sneaker probably twice the size of his own shoes. If he'd been asked why he would bring such a filthy thing home with him, he could not have said, except that it would have been lost otherwise.

As if in punishment for what he'd done, suddenly there were no more weekends in Trenton. Not for some time would Philip learn why.

And then, ten months after the move to Nyack, the call came.

The former Mrs. Miriam Szaara was ordered to bring her thirteen-year-old son, Philip, to Trenton Police Headquarters to be questioned by detectives involved in the "continuing investigation" into former New Jersey Republican State Senator Roy Szaara.

Philip's father had begun serving his twelve-to-fifteen-year sentence at the New Jersey Men's Facility at Rahway. He'd pleaded guilty to assorted charges in order to avoid a protracted and lurid trial, and further legal costs, for he'd declared bankruptcy. The ugly headlines had disappeared from the *Times*, replaced by other lurid headlines pertaining to strangers. Philip's mother remained unshaken in her belief that by changing their surname she had severed all links with her former husband, and no one dared suggest otherwise.

Now she was furious! And even more incensed when the detective who'd called her offered to "provide transportation" for her and her son to Police Headquarters.

"As if I can't drive by myself. As if I don't know the way. As if I might get lost. As if I might disappear."

Philip had to be excused from school and brought with him several textbooks in which he might hide from his mother.

"But why, *why*? Why would they want to involve *you*?"

He had not seen his father since the mandated weekends had come to an abrupt end. Since before his father's resignation had played and replayed on New Jersey network TV. How many weeks after the night of Spider Boy that had been he'd have had to calculate. The stolen sneaker was safely hidden in his room behind a row of old videos: "Fly Away Home," "Winged Migration," "When Dinosaurs Reigned." The Guatemalan woman who cleaned house for Philip's grandparents knew not to touch Philip's videos or anything else on his shelves or desk.

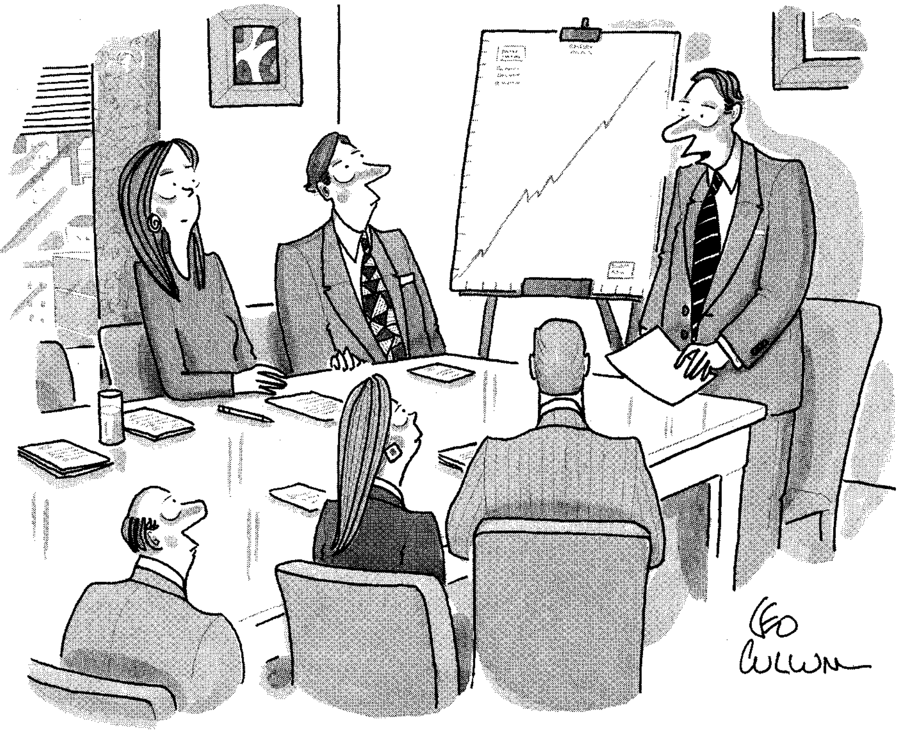
He hadn't been questioned about his father before. Once, with a forced smile, his mother had inquired about his weekends in Trenton, had things been "all right," and Philip had said yes and that was all.

Still, since his father's departure from his life Philip thought of him more frequently. He had not dared suggest, even to his grandparents, that he be allowed to visit his father in prison, for such a request would have dismayed and infuriated them, and there was no chance, not the faintest glimmer of a chance, that he might say such a thing to his mother.

Now, seeing signs for the Rahway exit on the turnpike, Philip's mother said suddenly, with a breathless laugh, "There! We could stop. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Philip shook his head. No.

For he knew that his father would not want to be seen in such a place. His



"*The chart, of course, is nonrepresentational.*"

• •

father had always dressed so stylishly—expensive clothes, haircuts. His fingernails were manicured and the cuffs of his trademark white silk dress shirts always spotless. Philip found this comforting, or had. He had admired his father's heavy, handsome watch, with its platinum-gold stretch band—an expensive watch with a famous brand name, received as a gift. His father had joked that the damned watch was so heavy he couldn't wear it in bed. Damned watch didn't keep time as well as the cheap Timex watches he'd bought in drugstores as a kid.

Now everywhere, even in the company of his mother, and in his classes at the Edgerstoune School, Philip thought of his father and heard his father's teasing and admonishing voice. *Your mother should keep you cleaner. Secret between us, promise*? Repeatedly he heard, *There are places in the world where people vanish,* or was it *There are places in the world where people can vanish*? He saw again the beautiful pale-bronze Acura cruising the streets of Chester, South Philly, Camden. He saw the view of glittering lights from his father's twelfth-floor apartment. He was sure that at the Camden train station the ghost figure of Spider Boy might be spotted, that the brightly lit booth at McDonald's would retain the ghost figures of all three of them, if only he could go back and look.

On the drive to Trenton he was beset by such memories. They had exited the turnpike and were driving south on Route 1 toward Trenton and the Delaware River, and as always there was the small thrill of "Exit Only" and "Last Exit Before Bridge to Pa." Here was a mostly abandoned industrial landscape of smokestacks and refineries, factories and warehouses marooned within acres of cracked pavement, overgrown vacant lots, oily ponds, billboards of tattered yet grinning faces, tenement buildings with boarded-up windows. Philip smiled, as if wishing to believe that he was coming home, though the house on the Delaware River had been sold and his father's apartment had been vacant for months.

"Ever seen him before, Philip? Take your time."

Spread across the table in the windowless interview room were a half-dozen snapshots of a thin, dark-haired boy not much older than Philip, frowning at the camera. His head was not shaved but covered in lustrous dark curls and his eyes were clear and not shadowed like a skull's eyes, yet you could tell that this was Spider Boy, younger than when Philip had seen him.

Quickly Philip shook his head. No. He'd never seen this boy before.

"This is a missing boy, Philip. He's fourteen in these pictures. He's older now, and he's been missing since last May. Any information you can provide."

Philip sat silent, staring. In two of the photographs the boy was wearing a white T-shirt and smoking a cigarette. In one he was wearing what appeared to be a rumpled pajama top, partly opened to show a pale sunken chest and a single berry-colored nipple.

No. Philip had no information to provide. His mother stood close behind him with her hand on his shoulder.

"Take your time, Philip. There's no hurry."

There were two detectives. Philip knew that they were watching him closely, and that they were aware of his mother's quickened breathing. They had surprised Philip by shaking hands with him as if he were an adult. They took care to call his mother "Ms. Hudgkins." In the confusion of the moment Philip had not heard their names. He had not heard most of what the detectives had said. He understood that his mother was annoying them by insisting over and over that her son was only a child and knew nothing about his father's private life. He had not seen his father in months. He had rarely seen his father during the last several years, for his father had lived apart from the family since Philip was ten. Now he was only thirteen and he was trying to adjust to a new home and a new school. . . . The detectives listened politely. They did not interrupt. Philip felt a pang of embarrassment that his mother had become a woman to be pitied and humored. She was wearing dark clothing and her hair was pulled back into a chignon, yet her mouth flashed red with lipstick and her eyes were unnaturally bright.

It had been suggested to Philip's mother that she wait outside while the detectives spoke with Philip, but of course she had refused. She had not brought her son all the way to Trenton, she said, to abandon him to strangers.

"Any of these? Look familiar?"

There were folders of such photographs. All were of teen-age boys. Philip was smiling, and shaking his head no. He was having difficulty seeing, but he did not want to wipe his eyes on his sleeve. The gesture would be a sign of weakness, and he knew that adult men are contemptuous of weakness in boys.

"Take your time, Philip. We understand."

The hand on Philip's shoulder was urgent; he could feel nails through his shirt.

Suddenly, Philip had to use a rest room. The need came upon him as quick as a pain.

His mother insisted upon accompanying him. "I don't want him alone for a moment. Not in this place."

Philip resented his mother's speaking of him in the third person, as if he were a very young child. When he moved toward the door as if to elude her, she seized his arm and walked with him, holding him captive. The detectives behaved as if this were nothing unusual. But Philip saw their eyes on his mother in the way he'd sometimes seen, years ago, his father's eyes on her, detached and calculating.

At the men's room (they were on the second floor of the Trenton Police Headquarters, in an old, partly renovated building on North Clinton Avenue), Philip's mother balked at allowing him to go inside alone. Nor did she want one of the detectives to accompany him. Oh, Philip hated this woman right then! He dreaded having her enter the men's room with him. One of the detectives suggested a compromise: he would look into the rest room to make sure that no one was inside, then Philip's mother could verify that this was so, and then Philip could use the rest room undisturbed. No one would be allowed to enter so long as Philip was inside and Philip's mother could wait immediately outside the door to accompany him back to the interview room. In that way, Ms. Hudgkins could be assured that no one would approach her son without her permission.

Reluctantly, as if suspecting a trick, Philip's mother agreed, and Philip was able to use the rest room undisturbed. How like kindergarten this was, his mother anxiously overseeing his first days! He could not bear to see his reflection in the mirror. He could not bear to look at his weak, frightened soul glittering like tears in his eyes. It was difficult for him to pee. He wondered if a surveillance camera was trained on him. When he emerged from the rest room, he was shaking with indignation and trying not to cry. His mother said quickly that this was too upsetting for him, she was taking him back to Nyack immediately, and in a rage Philip threw off her hand and told the detectives, "I saw him. The first one. His name was Reuben."

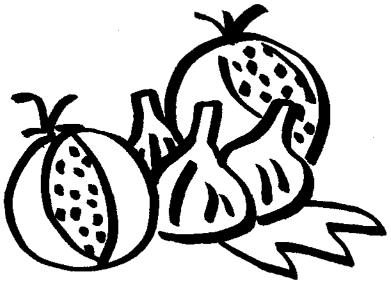
Was he'd said without thinking. He had not meant *was*. He had no reason to think *was*. But all that he had been determined not to tell the detectives that day, suddenly he would tell in a rush of words that his mother could not prevent, and which would be recorded on tape and could not be unsaid. There was a comfort in this.

"Still daylight! You'd think it would be night." His mother was peering at her surroundings as if she had no idea where she was. They'd been in Police Headquarters for what seemed like a full day, and yet when they emerged the sun was still well above the horizon and the sky was hazy with light. Philip's mother was shaken and dazed and moved like an elderly woman.

At the car, she seemed to rouse herself. She turned the key in the ignition briskly and gunned the motor.

In Trenton traffic, Philip's mother impulsively turned west, in the direction of the river. She couldn't bear Route 1, not for the second time that day. She would take the River Road north to I-95, and avoid most of Trenton altogether. It was out of their way, she said, but the detour was worth it.

"We'll pass the old house. But we won't drop in. Strangers live there now. Good luck to them!"



At Police Headquarters, Philip's mother had become too upset to listen to his interview with the detectives and had had to be escorted from the room. Afterward, when he'd emerged from the interview room, she had hurried to embrace him wordlessly. He'd been crying, and she hugged him so tightly that they trembled together as the detectives looked on, embarrassed.

Now, driving along the River Road, she said, as if thinking aloud, "You had to. I know."

Running parallel to the River Road was a narrow canal of muddy water and beyond the canal was the wide, windy Delaware River. On the other side of the highway were small suburban houses that, within a few miles, gave way to larger and more imposing houses in the hills. There, at the top of one landscaped hill, was the sprawling glass-and-stucco "contemporary" in which, long ago it now seemed, the Szaara family had lived.

Philip's mother did no more than glance at the house. "I was never happy there. That style of architecture has no soul."

Philip squinted at the house, barely visible behind a scrim of juniper pine. A pulse beat in his eyes. He hated it that strangers lived there now, that another child had appropriated his room. A boy his age or younger for whom the future held no dread.

Philip expected his mother to turn onto the entrance ramp of I-95 near Titusville, but she drove past it without slowing. He dared not say anything to her. She was driving over the speed limit, clenching the steering wheel tight. They were veering ever farther from the turnpike and the Garden State Parkway, which would return them to Nyack. They were miles beyond suburban Trenton, in a sparsely populated area of western New Jersey bounded on the right by densely wooded hills. Philip's mother was breathing quickly now. "I am so angry with you, Philip," she said suddenly. "I am so angry my heart hurts from beating hard. I think I need to stop this car. I think you should get out of this car and leave me alone for a while."

Philip was stunned. He was unable to speak, to defend himself. At Police Headquarters he'd tried to say he was sorry, but his mother had hugged him warmly. She had seemed to forgive him.

Yet now she was saying vehemently, “This shame you’ve brought us. This new shame. Hitchhikers! It will be in the newspapers, it will be on television. Where can we hide? I can’t move us again. You could have let it go, Philip. That boy, that missing boy, you could have let him go.”

She was braking the car, skidding and sliding from the roadway into a deserted rest stop. They were at the edge of Washington Crossing State Park. Wordless, Philip yanked the car door open and charged blindly away. He was trembling with hurt, indignation. He was aware of picnic tables, benches. Shuttered rest rooms in a fake log cabin. An overturned trash can that reeked of garbage.

He wasn’t going to cry, for he was furious. His mother had no right to punish him at such a time. He had told only the truth of what he knew and he did not wish the truth untold, even if it brought shame to them all. He knew that if he pleaded with his mother, if he returned to her tearful and craven, she would relent and love him again, but he’d had enough of her love, he’d had enough of his father’s love, and he hoped never to see either of them again.

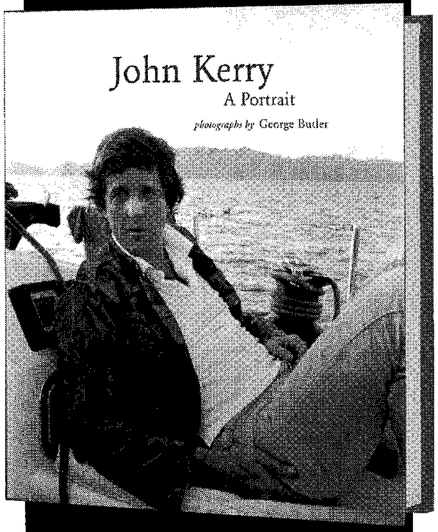
At the edge of the rest stop was a sodden woodchip trail leading into a hilly wooded area. A sign read “Mountain Meadow—3 Miles.” Philip began to hike the trail, breaking into a run from time to time. He had no idea where he was, what he was doing. He wanted only to run. In Trenton, in the interview room, he’d been exhausted and had wanted to lay his head down on his arms and shut his eyes, but in this new place his strength had returned. There was a smell here of rich damp earth and awakening vegetation. The day had been unseasonably warm for early April, and already small insects, gnats, and flies brushed against his face. He began to perspire. His mother had made him wear a lined jacket, which he removed and dropped on the trail. He was hiking uphill. All that summer, that previous summer, his father had promised to take him camping at the Delaware Water Gap, but always something had prevented it, always something had “come up.” Now he would never see his father again, for he’d broken his promise to him—all that was finished.

He passed the one-mile marker, and he passed the two-mile marker. His feet were wet; the trail had become overgrown. His breath was erratic, exhilarated. By this time more than forty minutes had passed. By now his mother would be wandering forlorn and fretful among the picnic tables and the reeking garbage, calling, *Philip*? *Phil-ip*? *Where are you*?, uncertain if she should be angry or alarmed. He could see her tugging at the (padlocked) door of the men’s rest room. Her glaring red mouth as she called his name, called and called his name, and there came, in rebuke, only silence.

The sun had descended in the sky and hung, pale and sickle-like, just above the tree line. Philip was on high ground, hiking along a ridge above a swift-flowing stream. The woodchip trail had long since vanished. This new trail was sometimes so faint as to be indistinct from the underbrush surrounding it. Philip began to hear voices. For a terrible moment he thought that he might have hiked in an ellipse, that he was returning to his mother, but that was impossible. He was making his way, trying not to lose his balance along the edge of a hill, and below the hill was the creek, and on the far side of the creek were several adults and children. A man was casting a fishing line into the dark glittering water. A boy crouched beside him. Philip halted, not wanting to be seen. He was about thirty feet above the creek, panting. He squatted amid boulders. He leaned his elbows on his knees, trying to catch his breath. Close around him were rocks; the slightest pressure might send one rolling down the hill. He was very still. He saw the boy on the creek bank glance up at him and wave. He saw the man with the fishing pole look toward him. He had not meant to be seen, but he had been seen. Impulsively he raised his arm to wave back.

Maybe they would call to him? Maybe they would invite him to join them? Maybe that was how this long day would end, somewhere in western New Jersey in Washington Crossing State Park? ♦

Discover what drives the man who would be president.



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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

COUNTERLIVES

Philip Roth's "The Plot Against America."

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

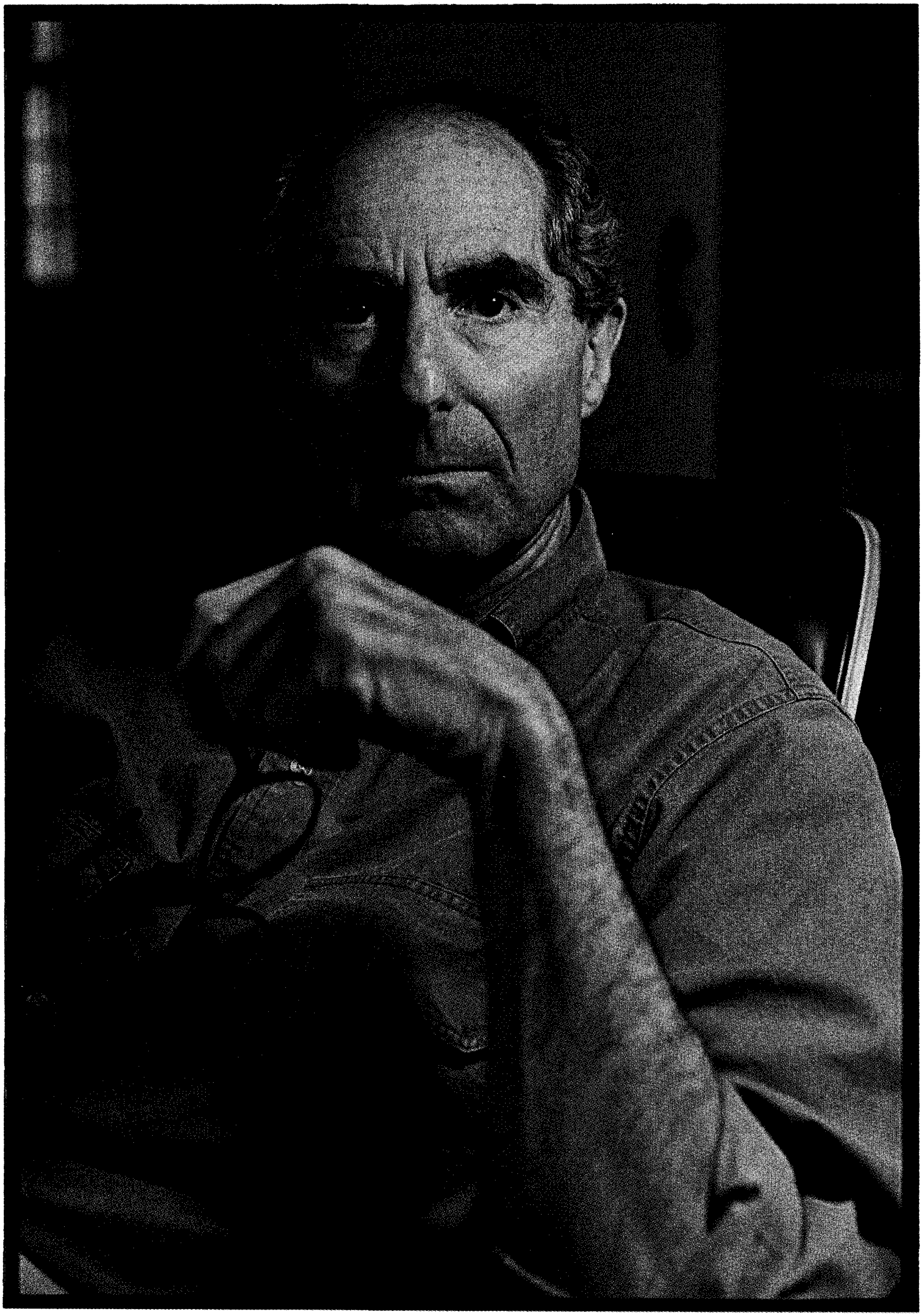
Nathan Zuckerman, the hero of several of Philip Roth's mid-career novels, is dogged by the notoriety of a book he wrote in 1969, "Carnovsky," which told of a Jew reacting against his parents' first-generation respectability by chasing shiksas around town and involving them in uncanonical sex acts. "Carnovsky" is a huge hit, and everyone assumes that it is autobiographical. "Hey, you do all that stuff in that book?" the Con Edison meter reader asks Zuckerman. "You are something else, man." But the interest in the book is not just prurient. "Carnovsky" is a satire on the Jewish superego, and so it is decried by Jews and denounced by rabbis, on the ground that it will inflame anti-Semitism. A letter addressed only to "The Enemy of the Jews" is sent to the book's publisher; the mail room knows where to forward it.

Zuckerman tries to answer such charges, then tries to ignore them, then finds himself answering them again. By the time we see him in "The Anatomy Lesson," he has been fighting the battle over "Carnovsky" for four years, and his work is at a standstill: "The endless public disputation—what a curse!" At the end of "The Anatomy Lesson," he decides that he will give up writing and become a doctor. My son the doctor: what better atonement could you make to your parents—and, by extension, to all Jewish overseers?

I can think of one better. Imagine that you are Philip Roth, a man bearing a marked resemblance to Zuckerman. Imagine that your book "Portnoy's Complaint," published the same year as "Carnovsky," and treating similar matters, was the cause of a similar public reaction, with people stopping you in the street to tell you sex jokes or call you a pervert, and with public figures denouncing you as a menace to your people. (The distinguished Israeli scholar Gershom Scholem wrote that the Jews, not the author, would pay the price for "Portnoy": "Woe to us on that day of reckoning!") And say that, like Zuckerman, you tried to justify yourself, but at the same time dug in your heels, and that for thirty-five years—much longer than Zuckerman's agon—you went on portraying Jews who showed not only the traditionally prized Jewish traits, such as wit, brains, and moral seriousness, but also the Jewish-joke characteristics: Jews who never stop talking (a character in the 1986 "Counterlife" says that in Israel, even if you've done nothing all day, you go to bed exhausted, just from having people yell at you continually); Jews who view the world as divided between Gentiles and Jews (Portnoy's mother, Sophie, on the Gentiles: "THEY ARE ANOTHER BREED OF HUMAN BEING ENTIRELY! YOU WILL BE TORN ASUNDER!"); Jews who therefore see life as sown with peril, not just from anti-Semites (there are rugs you can trip over, convertibles you can flip over in), and who can't stop telling you to watch out. In Roth's novels, this relentless cautioning is usually done by parents. The sons, most of whom are writers, rebel, and produce comic novels about their elders. For this, guilt is heaped upon them. "Jewish morality, Jewish endurance, Jewish wisdom, Jewish families—everything is grist for your fun-machine," Zuckerman's brother says to him. If you were Philip Roth, caught up throughout your career in this quarrel, and you wanted to make peace, what could you do? Write a novel about how the Jewish parents were right all along. Produce a book about an American pogrom.

Roth's new novel, "The Plot Against America," opens in 1940, and at first it seems almost a memoir. In much of his writing (not just the Zuckerman series), Roth has used details from his own life—that's why people think his work is autobiographical—but here he goes further. The book concerns a family called the Roths: father Herman, an insurance agent for Met Life; mother Bess, a housewife; older son Sandy, twelve; younger son Philip, seven. They live in a two-and-half-family house on Summit Avenue in Weequahic, a working-class section of Newark, where the boys attend the Chancellor Avenue School. To the extent of my knowledge, this is, point for point, the family that Roth grew up in—the names, the street, the house, the school, the father's job. Later in the book, the family's phone number is given, and I'll bet that's real, too. So is the portrayal of the family's status as Jews. Though the parents suffered anti-Semitism when they were young, the world they now live in is secure. Weequahic is almost entirely Jewish. The parents certainly think of themselves as Jews, but, in their opinion, they are as American as they are Jewish. This was Roth's situation, too. When he was a child, he told an interviewer, he never felt threatened as a Jew; he didn't even know that he belonged to a minority. Nonetheless, he said, he was "surrounded from birth with a *definition* of the Jew . . . as sufferer, the Jew as an object of ridicule, disgust, scorn, contempt, derision, of every heinous form of persecution and brutality." It was out of the gap between those two experiences—his sense of safety versus the constant warn-

Roth's new book is a historical novel, of a fantastic sort, set during the Lindbergh Administration. Photograph by James Nachtwey.



ings that no Jew was safe—that "Portnoy" was born, he claimed. "The Plot Against America" also comes out of that divide, but it looks very different. It is a historical novel, of a fantastic sort. In the book's first paragraph, heading off all the true-to-life details, comes the statement that these events took place during the Lindbergh Administration.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh, a twenty-five-year-old stunt flier and airmail pilot from Minnesota, made the world's first non-stop transatlantic solo flight, from New York to Paris, and became an international hero. Five years later, his first child, twenty months old, was kidnapped and murdered, thus making Lindbergh not just a hero but a martyr, a saint. To escape the ensuing publicity, Lindbergh and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, a best-selling writer, moved to England in 1935. While in Europe, Lindbergh went to Germany to inspect the planes being developed there, and he became friendly with the country's new leaders. Hitler, he wrote—after the promulgation of the 1935 racial laws—was "a great man." In 1938, Air Marshal Hermann Göring, "by order of der Führer," bestowed on him a medal replete with swastikas. In 1939, Lindbergh returned to the United States and began giving heavily attended speeches in support of isolationism. The war that had broken out in Europe, he said, was Europe's problem, not ours. Certain self-interested groups were trying to push us into it—for example, the Jews, whose control over "our press, radio, and motion pictures" was a matter of grave national concern. "We cannot allow the natural passions and prejudices of other peoples to lead our country to destruction." In other words, Jews, though they might be American citizens, were still "other peoples," foreigners.

At this moment, Franklin D. Roosevelt was preparing to run for a third term as President, a breach of tradition that many people disapproved of. Lindbergh, a Republican, was urged to run against him. In June of 1940, in Philadelphia, came the Republican Convention. This is the moment at which "The Plot Against America" breaks with history. In reality, the Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie, a moderate, and, in November, he was defeated by Roosevelt. In "The Plot," the Convention is deadlocked until, on the twentieth ballot, the weary electors receive a surprise visit. At three in the morning, Lindbergh flies into Philadelphia, strides into the convention hall with his goggles still on, and is nominated by acclamation. In November, he beats Roosevelt in a landslide.

One of the glories of the book is its counterpoint of large and small, its zooming back and forth, from chapter to chapter, between world events and the reactions to them in the Roth household. On the night of the Republicans' balloting, Weequahic is loud with radios, as tense Jews sit waiting to find out if a Nazi sympathizer is going to run for President of their country. When, just before dawn, they find out that this is so, they wander out into the street in their pajamas. Philip, the book's narrator, describes the scene:

> Men whom I knew as . . . silent, dutiful breadwinners who all day long unclogged drainpipes or serviced furnaces or sold apples by the pound and then in the evening looked at the paper and listened to the radio and fell asleep in the living room chair, plain people who happened to be Jews [were] now storming about the street and cursing with no concern for propriety, abruptly thrust back into the miserable struggle from which they had believed their families extricated by the providential migration of the generation before.

Makes sense, right? Why should the sufferings of these people come to an end in the space of one generation, with the crossing of one ocean?

Soon after taking office, Lindbergh signs non-aggression treaties with Germany and Japan. People who object to this, especially Jews, are branded as Communists. But their numbers are few: Lindbergh is getting eighty-to-ninety-per-cent approval ratings. Among his admirers are many Jews. The Lindbergh Administration has created an Office of American Absorption, or O.A.A., which is basically a program for dispersing the Jewish minority into the Gentile majority—in other words, for de-Jewing the Jews (and also for breaking up Jewish voting blocs). A Newark rabbi, Lionel Bengelsdorf—a deliciously pontifical windbag (compare Judge Wapter, in "The Ghost Writer")—has been put in charge of the O.A.A. for the state of New Jersey, and, as he sees it, only narrow, paranoid "ghetto Jews" could find fault with this estimable project. The country's few patrician Jews—the financiers, the board members, who are mostly of German Jewish stock—also regret that so many of their co-religionists fail to see the light. Why don't these people move into regular neighborhoods and stop acting so Jewy? Then they, too, could go to Harvard and become investment bankers.

In the unkindest cut, Sandy, Philip's adored big brother, defects. As part of an O.A.A. program, he is sent for a summer to a tobacco farm in Kentucky. He comes back full of pork chops and condescension for his parents. Then, in 1942, the O.A.A. institutes a program called Homestead 42, whereby the government

1:53 A.M.

There's a thin film of March snow on the street—
like the skin on a cup of milk—
and I get to lie down
again, I get to lie down
beside this great, blond, muscled light.

David has left a lamp on so I can read myself to peace.
But he is my great ease, my slumbering moon—
our son orbiting
in dreams across the hall,
and our daughter, spinning much farther out,
runs into her Chinese orphanage
in the bright middle of the afternoon.

—*Liz Rosenberg*

will move Jewish employees of certain, specially chosen corporations out of their smelly urban enclaves and into wholesome Southern and Midwestern communities where those companies have branch offices. Met Life is one of the participating corporations, and Herman Roth gets a letter congratulating him and his family on being selected for relocation. He says no, and this man who, having left school at the age of twelve, was proud of what he achieved as an insurance agent—proud of his suit and his tie and his car—quits his job at Met Life and goes to work hauling tomatoes for his brother Monty, a produce wholesaler. Other Jews are leaving the country on their own, emigrating to Canada. All of this will sound familiar to anyone conversant with the history of the European Jews in the thirties. And, as in Hitler's Europe, one thing leads to another. Soon store windows are broken. Jews start to die.

Many people are going to see this story as a recanting. Did Sophie Portnoy and her husband, Jack, live their lives "in continual anticipation of total catastrophe"? Well, Q.E.D. In an eerie conversion, "The Plot Against America" transforms the piety-spouting, finger-shaking elders of the Roth œuvre into prophets. Bess Roth is like Sophie—worried, protective—but she is no longer banging on the bathroom door, demanding to inspect your bowel movement. She is doing what needs to be done: hanging out the wash, making the sandwiches, going to work in a department store to save up money for a move to Canada. She is the most admirable woman Roth has ever created (that is a slow track, but never mind), and she is utterly alive and convincing.

Roth's novels, however, are basically about fathers and sons, and "The Plot" is no exception. The father in this book is one of Roth's famous yakkers, a kinsman, for example, of the father in "American Pastoral," who can never stop telling people how to behave, for their own good, and thus driving them insane. (At the end of that book, a woman to whom he is orating on the perils of alcoholism tries to stick a fork in his eye, and you sympathize with her.) Herman Roth does the same: nightly he blankets his family in "the lecturing and the hectoring love" that he bears them. But he is a far more endearing figure. Roth once told an interviewer that when he was a child his father suffered a severe financial setback, and that the courage he showed in fighting his way back from that made him seem to his son a cross "between Captain Ahab and Willy Loman." In "The Plot," the father also suffers a reverse, when he has to go to work for Uncle Monty. This involves a sixteen-hour workday, at a huge pay cut. He shoulders it like a champion. He is good, he is responsible, he is uncertain. Chapter after chapter, he fears that he is making mistakes, doing the wrong thing. He is strong—big-shouldered, big-chested—but his ears stick out and he talks like an innocent. (Seeing the Lincoln Memorial for the first time, he says, "And they shot him, the dirty dogs.") He is The Parent: serious, virtuous, limited, oppressive, poignant. And every decision that he makes in the course of the book turns out to be correct.

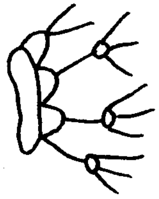
Other books by Roth, when they err, usually do so by an excess of provocation, a refusal to get up off the whoopee cushion. "The Plot," when it goes astray, does so in the opposite direction—sentimentality, rhetoric—and this is often in relation to the father. The endless parental haranguing? This, Roth now says, was part of the energy that enabled Jewish slum boys to fight their way out of poverty: "Ardor, for these men, was all they had to go on. What their Gentile betters called pushiness was generally just this—the ardor that was everything." Here, in two sentences, we see something like what Tolstoy, in "Anna Karenina" 's famous harvesting scene, did for Levin: too much—the language is incantatory, pushy, even—and also just enough, enough to bang us on the head and say, "I really mean this."

But what does Roth really mean? Is he sorry that he said all those naughty things about the Jews? Sophie Portnoy, Judge Wapter—these immortals—does he want us to forget about them? "American Pastoral" (1997), with its admirable, duty-doing Jewish hero, was seen by some as a making of amends. So was the 1993 "Operation Shylock," in which the protagonist—called Philip Roth—actually goes on a spy mission for the Israeli intelligence service. In "The Counterlife," we are introduced to a leader of a West Bank settlement with

Monterey
Jack
From
Alaska?

many warnings that he is a dangerous fanatic; then the man turns out, disturbingly, to produce a vivid, cogent argument (including a warning that there will be pogroms in America). Is Roth, now seventy-one, going down a penitential road, and is "The Plot" his newest way station?

I don't think so. One thing to notice is that the story is a fable. Roth was once asked whether, in writing "Portnoy," he was influenced by the notoriously abrasive Jewish standup comics of the period—Lenny Bruce, for example. He replied that, if anything, "Portnoy" was inspired by the work of a Jewish sit-down comic, Franz Kafka. Kafka, together with Gogol and Swift, also lurks behind many of his other novels, as he has told us. Clearly, what Roth admires in these writers—or what he has emulated—is their ability to couch the most extravagant, grotesque fantasy in an utterly mundane realism, so that the reader cannot say, "No, this could not happen." The other superb achievement of those writers is to combine horror with comedy. They make you laugh; they suck you in. Their writings are satires of the highest kind, and that's what "The Plot" is, too. It's not a prophecy; it's a nightmare, and it becomes more nightmarish—and also funnier and more bizarre—as it goes along. (Walter Winchell runs for President; Philip's mother tells him he can't go to school tomorrow, because we might be declaring war on Canada.) In the end, the book may not even be about the Jews. To find the actions of one's government both comical and mortally frightening is an experience that Gentiles can share, especially at the present moment, which may have figured as heavily as the Second World War in the genesis of Roth's tale.



Something else that prevents us from seeing "The Plot" as a straightforward political statement is its "multivocality." Many voices speak, in opposition to each other, and almost all of them (not Rabbi Bengelsdorf) sound persuasive. This is an old gambit of Roth's, and the one that probably annoys his detractors most; they can't figure out whose side he's on. It is also the one quality—or one of four or five (the satiric gift, the voice, the ear, the exploration of American history)—that has made him great. In "The Plot Against America," the multivocality is achieved, for the most part, by having a political catastrophe, debated by many people in solemn moral terms, be narrated through the eyes of a child, who lacks morality, who wants only his mother and his stamp collection, and who has no fine phrases to cover his self-seeking. When his cousin Alvin, disgusted by Lindbergh's isolationism, goes off to the European front with the Canadian Army and returns with one of his legs blown off, this is piteous, and also it's not, because we hear from Philip—who must share his bedroom with his wounded cousin—about how horrified and grossed out he is by Alvin's stump (it has scabs), by his prosthesis (it has straps and clamps), by his missing leg (it will come and chase Philip in the night).

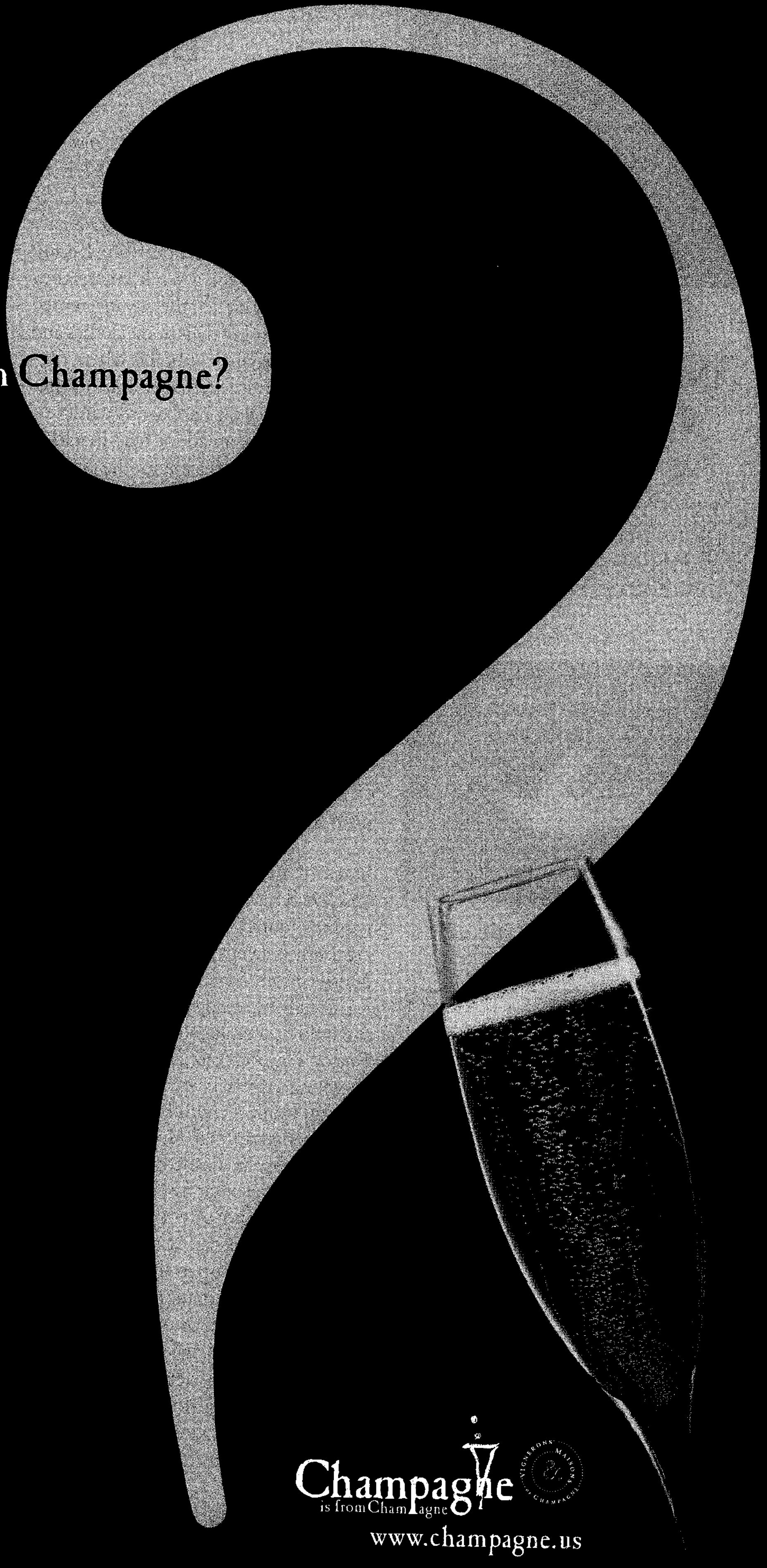
The book's foremost sufferer, though, is not Alvin but a little boy named Seldon Wishnow, who lives downstairs from the Roths. Seldon throws a ball like a girl; all he likes to do is play chess. Philip's goal is to be a regular guy, and he wants no part of this loser. Seldon, meanwhile, worships Philip and lies in wait, each morning, to walk to school with him. In the middle of the book, Seldon's father dies. He has cancer, and finally he can't stand it anymore and kills himself. This is very sad, except in Philip's account of it. Mr. Wishnow, he enthusiastically tells us, strangled himself with the family's curtain cords, in the hall closet: "When Seldon, home from school, went to put his coat away, he found his father, in his pajamas, hanging face-down on the closet floor amid the . . . galoshes." Seldon's fatherlessness makes him more pathetic, of course, except in Philip's eyes. Everywhere he turns, there is that pasty face, that imploring voice. Finally, Philip hatches a plan. His Aunt Evelyn is Rabbi Bengelsdorf's assistant, which means that she has control over Homestead 42 assignments. Philip goes to her and recommends the Wishnows as candidates for that program. Seldon and his widowed mother are thus relocated to Kentucky. Goodbye, Seldon!

But then the pogroms begin, in Kentucky, among other places, and one night the Roth family gets a call from Seldon, who says that it's 10 P.M. and his mother hasn't come home: "She's dead, Mrs. Roth! Just like my father! Now *both* my parents are dead!" Furthermore, he hasn't had his dinner. The conversation that ensues is one of the finest scenes in the book. To calm Seldon down, Mrs. Roth wants him to eat something. Seldon can find no dinner food in the house, but he manages to locate some Rice Krispies, and Mrs. Roth tells him to make himself a meal of that, a proper meal:

> "Now?"
>
> "Do as I say, please," she told him. "I want you to eat breakfast."
>
> "Is Philip there?"
>
> "He's here, but you cannot talk to him. You have to eat first. I'm going to call you back in half an hour, after you've eaten. It's ten after ten, Seldon."
>
> "In Newark it's ten after ten?"
>
> "In Newark and Danville both. It's exactly the same time in both places. I'm going to call you back at quarter to eleven," she told him.
>
> "Can I talk to Philip then?"
>
> "Yes, but I want you to sit down first with everything you need at the kitchen table. I want you to use a spoon and a fork and a napkin and a knife. Eat slowly. Use dishes. Use a bowl. Is there any bread?"
>
> "It's stale. It's just a couple of slices."
>
> "Do you have a toaster?"
>
> "Sure. We brought it here in the car. Remember the morning when we all packed the car?"

Encapsulated in this exchange is just about every important element in the book: its moral beauty (the good, efficient, rescuing mother), its horror (Seldon is right, his mother has been killed, and though we already know this, Mrs. Roth and Seldon don't), its comedy ("Can I talk to Philip?"). In the end, the tireless Herman Roth drives to Kentucky and fetches the child, with the result that Philip, who had thought to remove Seldon from his neighborhood, instead finds him installed in his home, in the bed next to his, now vacated by Alvin. Mercifully, we are given no details about Seldon's grief. All Philip says is: "There was no stump for me to care for this time. The boy himself was the stump, and until he was taken to live with his mother's married sister in Brooklyn ten months later, I was the prosthesis." Good—he learns to be decent. (The book is a bildungsroman as well as a satire.) But, in front of us, at least—those two sentences are the last in the book—he never learns enough to hide what is less decent. He is therefore the ideal narrator for this sinuous and brilliant book, with its extreme sweetness (new in Roth), its black pain, and its low, ceaseless cackle. ♦

Champagne Not From Champagne?



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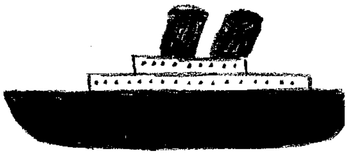
BRIEFLY NOTED

Heir to the Glimmering World, *by Cynthia Ozick (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* In 1933, the Mitwissers, a family of German Jews, arrive in America after a narrow and eccentric escape from Berlin. (Forced to hide for a week before they could flee, they circled the city in a rented limousine, wearing their finest clothes and assuming a regal air at hotels where they slipped in to use the bathroom.) After landing somewhat haphazardly in New York, they place an ad for help in a local paper. The only applicant for the job is an eighteen-year-old orphan, Rose Meadows, who narrates the story, and who observes the Mitwissers with the dry neutrality of an invisible servant. Her duties are vaguely defined—part nanny, part secretary—and her salary comes intermittently, the family's sole source of income being the whimsy of a troubled benefactor. Ozick portrays this ramshackle household to dazzling effect, as it adjusts to its many states of exile—from a sense of security, from cherished ideas, and from the consolations of each other.

Harbor, *by Lorraine Adams (Knopf; $23.95).* This début novel by a Pulitzer-winning journalist tells the story of Aziz Arkoun, a twenty-four-year-old Arab Muslim from Algeria who enters America illegally by hiding for fifty-two days in the hold of a tanker and swimming into Boston Harbor. Aziz falls in with a group of young Algerians in East Boston, including Rafik, a childhood friend who is now a petty criminal. Hopes for prosperity and safety are dashed: Aziz takes low-paying jobs, is beset by chaotic living arrangements, and, after stumbling across some suspicious secret dealings of Rafik's, gets caught up in the F.B.I. investigation of an international terrorist cell. Though the premise of the novel may seem too topical for its own good, Adams displays a gift for detail and character that takes us fully inside the complex systems of survival, kinship, and religious ideology which form Aziz's world.

The Mystery of Olga Chekhova, *by Antony Beevor (Viking; $24.95).* On Hitler's fiftieth birthday, Goebbels gave him a hundred and twenty movies, and the pair indulged their love of cinema by holding lavish parties for their favorite stars. One of these was Olga Chekhova, a Russian émigrée living in Berlin who was the niece of Anton Chekhov, and whose acting the Führer greatly admired. But her biggest fans were the Soviet secret police, who, seeing her closeness to the Nazi élite, recruited her as a sleeper agent. The closest she ever came to active duty was a 1941 plot to assassinate Hitler, but Stalin decided that keeping him around was a better idea. Beevor soft-pedals the more salacious details of his story and presents a documentary account of the large and complicated Chekhov clan. His painstaking work clears away historical gossip and shows how ingeniously Olga played powerful figures off against each other to survive the revolution, the war, and Stalin's purges.

You Call It Madness, *by Lenny Kaye (Villard; $25.95).* For a while in the nineteen-thirties, the crooner Russ Columbo was known as Bing Crosby's biggest rival. Now he is remembered chiefly for the bizarre circumstances of his death, when he was twenty-six: while his best friend was fiddling with an antique gun, it went off, hitting Columbo in the head. Columbo's family concealed this event from his mother for years, writing her letters in his name. Kaye, a guitarist for Patti Smith, is evidently a Columbo fanatic; his meticulously researched text is adorned with photographs and memorabilia from his own collection. His breathless, free-associating style occasionally compromises the clarity of the story, but it lets him under the skin of a fellow-musician. In Kaye's telling, Columbo is a cautious craftsman, quietly absorbing influences from Chopin to drag acts in order to arrive at his own inimitable style.



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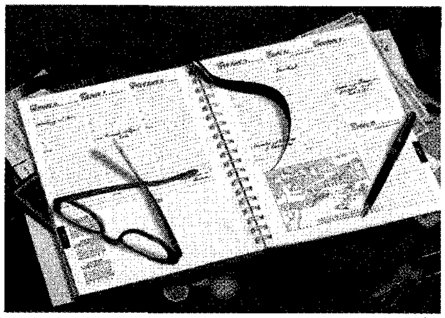

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE GENUINE ARTICLE

The strange case of Kyril Bonfiglioli.

BY LEO CAREY

"This is not an autobiographical novel," an author's note warns at the start of "Don't Point That Thing at Me" (Overlook; $13.95), by the British author Kyril Bonfiglioli. "It is about some *other* portly, dissolute, immoral and middle-aged art dealer." The dealer in question, Charlie Mortdecai, is also an occasional art thief, and at the opening of the novel there is an old gilt frame burning in the fireplace of his Mayfair penthouse, a Goya stolen from the Prado possibly hidden under his valuable Savonnerie rug, and, standing more or less on the rug, a hated antagonist from a special branch of the police:

> Somewhere in the trash he reads Martland has read that heavy men walk with surprising lightness and grace; as a result he trips about like a portly elf hoping to be picked up by a leprechaun. In he pranced, all silent and catlike and absurd, buttocks swaying noiselessly. . . . Ignoring the more inviting bottles on the drinks tray, he unerringly snared the great Rodney decanter from underneath and poured himself a gross amount of what he thought would be my Taylor '31. A score to me already, for I had filled it with Invalid Port of an unbelievable nastiness. He didn't notice: score two to me.

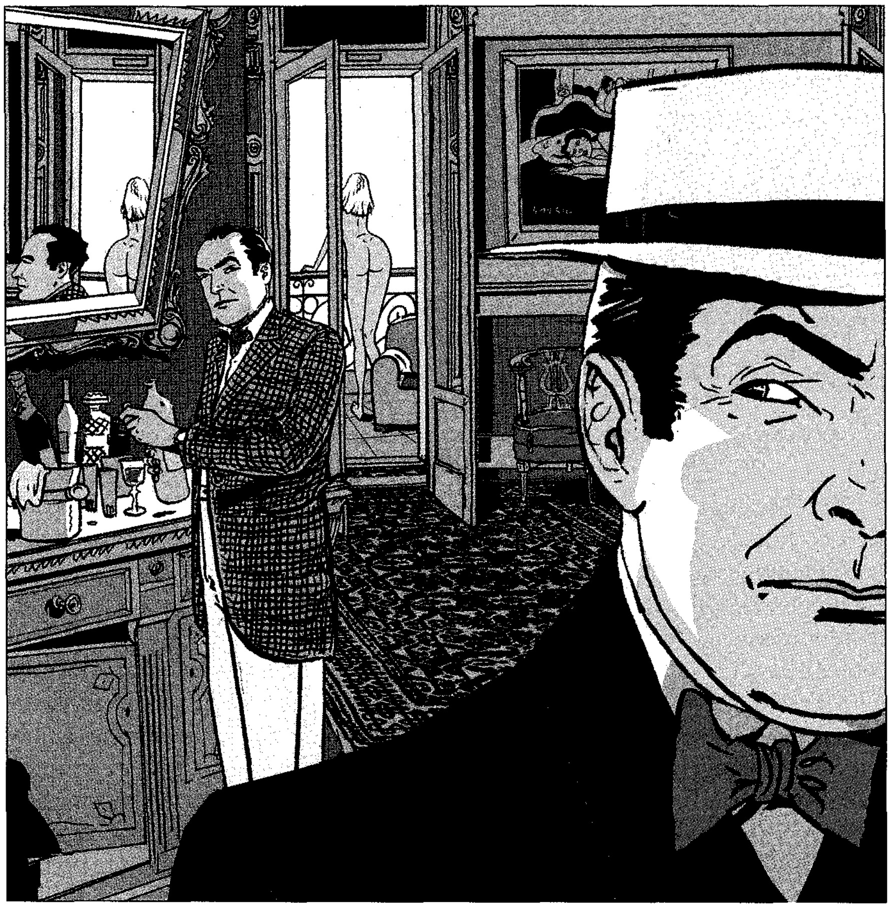
This is the quintessential Mortdecai voice: arch and insufferably, authoritatively snobbish. The effortless brio of Mortdecai's narration and the outrageousness of his prejudices have insured a following for the Mortdecai novels even while they have been out of print, and have led to their revival nearly twenty years after the death of their author. In England, Kyril Bonfiglioli's three main novels have been available as a Penguin paperback trilogy for a few years. Here, Overlook Press is starting out with just the first novel, "Don't Point That Thing at Me," perhaps anxious about the possible effects of exposing the American reading public to too much Mortdecai all at once.

One reason that Bonfiglioli's books have never quite found the readership they deserve is that, although they are ostensibly crime novels, they are far too badly behaved—too full of improbability and capricious digression—to please crime fans. The plot of "Don't Point That Thing at Me" (first published in 1973) is too complicated to be properly explained, and much too silly. Briefly, Mortdecai arranges the theft of the Goya for an American oil tycoon who has also become involved in blackmailing someone high up in the British government. Pretty soon, the secret services of Britain and America, and maybe even the associates of the tycoon, want Mortdecai dead, for various reasons. As chaotic as it is, this plot looks positively Aristotelian compared with that of the sequel, "After You with the Pistol" (1979), a teetering construction involving Chinese tongs, white slavers, and a plot to kill the Queen of England.

Though Bonfiglioli has a knack for cliffhangers, the plots are little more than excuses for displaying Mortdecai in all his dandyish glory. Mortdecai, the son of a peer, never tires of describing the splendors of his cellar, his table, and his tailoring. There is scarcely a meal (or a drink) that is not recounted in detail and meticulously evaluated, and he cannot leave the house without telling you, "I put on a dashing little tropical-weight worsted, a curly-brimmed coker and a pair of buckskins created by Lobb in a moment of genius." He loves to boast about the fine establishments he frequents in his London neighborhood. "I went a-slumming through the art-dealing district, carefully keeping my face straight as I looked in the shop windows—sorry, *gallery* windows—at the tatty Shayers and reach-me-down Koekkoeks." (It is a typical Bonfiglioli touch that the artists mentioned—precisely the kind of respectable nineteenth-century landscapists on which a high-end Mayfair dealer thrives—are just obscure enough to impress the reader.)

The novels hark back to a time when

everything a gentleman needed could be obtained within a square mile of St. James's, and Mortdecai himself, alternately pottering around the West End and shuttling around the world on dangerous missions, seems like the result of an unholy collaboration between P. G. Wodehouse and Ian Fleming. There is also a distinct debt to Raffles, the iconic gentleman thief created by the Edwardian writer E. W. Hornung. But whereas Raffles does subscribe to some code of honor (friendship, school, cricket), Mortdecai is pure self-interest and proud of it: " 'Idle, intelligent, devious; a survivor,' read the summary of my character on my last school report and I have not changed."



A bon vivant and art dealer, Bonfiglioli was often confused with his dandyish creation.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Mortdecai's old-fashioned life style continually runs up against the drabness of nineteen-seventies England. Visiting his Oxford alma mater, he finds that students have scrawled Trotskyite slogans on its exterior, while a meditation on "the essential *swindle* of all English months" contrasts the sentimental cliché of English pastoral ("happy, sun-burned maidens prancing on a village green") with the modern reality: "the pallid and pimply village maiden of today is waving her lumpish hips in a discotheque in the nearby town, munching a contraceptive pill while the rain roars down outside and the Babycham fizzes in its glass." In his judgment, "the only month one can depend on is January, when the cold is always as promised and one can still sometimes hear the ring of skates on the frozen tarn and, if one is lucky, the shriek of a drowning skater."

Mortdecai keeps a manservant, an ex-con named Jock, explaining that "you can't run a fine arts business these days without a thug and Jock is one of the best in the trade." Jock's coarseness makes the perfect foil for Mortdecai's sophistication, although Mortdecai is, to his credit, far too accomplished a snob to be snobbish in a narrow way. He describes Jock's fry-ups as lovingly as he does the Oysters Mornay at Wilton's, and on one occasion, finding himself behind bars, he even contrives to avoid bail because he has heard that the fish cakes served in the prison on Friday evenings are renowned. Much of the comedy of the novels derives from the way Mortdecai applies the rules and rhetoric of connoisseurship to such matters as combat ("I popped the heel of my hand under his nose—so much better than a punch"), gesture ("Mrs Spon flounced over to the window. I know lots of men who can flounce, but Mrs Spon is the last woman who can do it"), and sex:

> Bed . . . is not at all a good place for sex: sex should take place in armchairs, or in bathrooms, or on lawns which have been brushed but not too recently mown, or on sandy beaches if you happen to have been circumcised. If you are too tired to have intercourse except in bed you are probably too tired anyway and should be husbanding your strength. Women are the great advocates of sex in bed because they have bad figures to hide (usually) and cold feet to warm (always). Boys are different, of course. But you probably knew that.

In Mortdecai's world, there is an art to everything, and probably a science, too, even when it comes to reading the books. Each chapter of "Don't Point That Thing at Me" bears an epigraph from a poem by Browning (or, in subsequent books, by Tennyson, Swinburne, and Wyatt), and a teasing author's note explains that one epigraph is a "palpable forgery." The business of figuring out which (no extensive knowledge of Browning is required) draws the reader into Mortdecai's never-ending game of one-upmanship. A number of obscure jokes fulfill a similar function, as when Mortdecai complains to a bothersome policeman about a "touch of proctalgia": "He didn't ask what it meant; just as well, really." ("Pain in the ass" is the insult lurking behind this.) Some of the jokes seem to be deliberately un-gettable: "I always maintained that relating one's dreams is the third most boring thing a man can do. I need not tell you what the other two are."

In a recent memoir about Kyril Bonfiglioli, his wife of ten years, Margaret Bonfiglioli, writes of her amazement when fans display "complete confidence that he was a rich high-living connoisseur who spent most of his time toddling about St. James's." Even friends found it hard not to conflate the character and the author—his own editor, in correspondence, once mixed up the two—and it seems to have been an effect he strove for. On the dust jackets of his books, he would typically describe himself as "an accomplished fencer, a fair shot with most weapons," or "abstemious in all things except drink, food, tobacco and talking." Like Mortdecai, Bonfiglioli was an art dealer with exquisite taste and vast reserves of specialized knowledge, and, like Mortdecai, he enjoyed living in style, ate well, and drank too much. Unlike Mortdecai, he was perpetually broke—he seems to have spent his entire adult life in debt—and struggled to support a large family, eventually abandoning both struggle and family.

Kyril Bonfiglioli was born on the south coast of England in 1928, the son of an Italo-Slovene immigrant who dealt in antiquarian books; one of Kyril's earliest memories was of his father showing him a copy of Audubon's "Birds of America." During the Second World War, the family was evacuated after ordnance fell in the back garden, and, in 1943, Bonfiglioli's mother and eight-year-old younger brother were killed in a direct hit on their air-raid shelter. Bonfiglioli, who was fourteen, should have been in the shelter himself but was playing in the street; the incident apparently left him with the conviction that the good perish and the mischievous survive. It was he who had to give the news to his father, whose reaction he later recalled as "If only it had been you!"

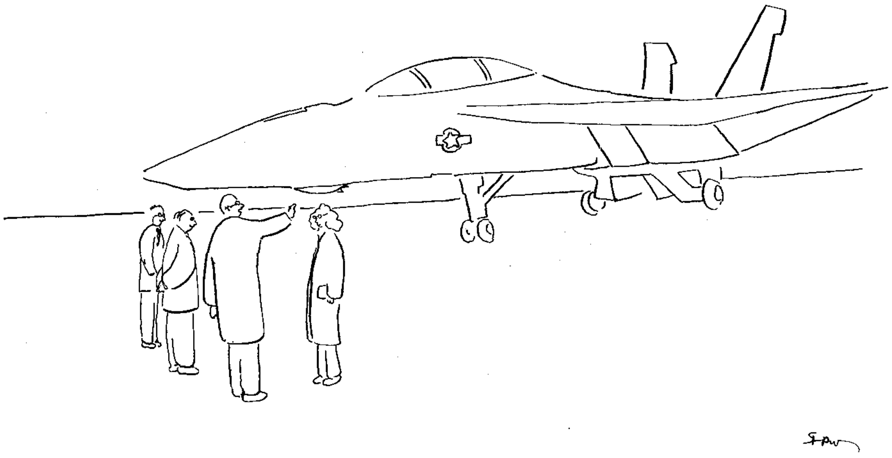
As a young man, after the war, Bonfiglioli served in the Army and was an inter-regimental sabre champion. He married, but his wife died shortly after the birth of their second child. Two years later, a twenty-seven-year-old father of two, and largely an autodidact, he went to study English at Balliol College. Oxford, the town where he lived for the next decade and a half, is well endowed with eccentrics, but even today, nearly forty years after he left, mention of Bonfiglioli—known to one and all as Bon—brings forth anecdotes. The poet Craig Raine recalls his "real if faltering charisma" and likens him to "a great musical touring the provinces—a master of ceremonies whose sequins were beginning to fall off."

At Oxford, he met his second wife, Margaret, with whom he would have three more children. After graduation, he worked at the Ashmolean Museum as an assistant to the art historian Edgar Wind, a job in which he manifested an astonishing visual memory; around the same time, he started dealing art, and, in 1960, he set up his own company, Bonfiglioli Limited. His wife recalls the extraordinary shifting contents of a home in which everything was potential stock—antique firearms, Dutch marquetry, Chinese porcelain, and dozens of stuffed birds in a questionable state of preservation, which Bon had bought from a Welsh natural-history museum, convinced that they were a bargain. As a dealer, Bon was resourceful. One day, he saw someone clearing out empty bottles from the cellars of All Souls College and offered to take them off his hands, having noticed that they were highly salable eighteenth-century bottles bearing the college arms in molded glass. The highlight of his career came in 1964, when he managed to buy a Tintoretto at a country auction for forty pounds.

Bonfiglioli's novels are every bit as crammed with precious clutter as his house was. He delights in revealing art-world tricks of the trade, as when Mortdecai explains the work of a liner (who can remove a painting from one canvas and transfer it to another), or goes to the auction of one of his own pictures, bids it up to the amount he paid for it, and rejoices when it is sold at a much higher price to someone he dislikes. Behind all this gamesmanship hovers the suggestion that the art business, for all its vaunted sophistication, is never more than one step away from outright fraud. Mortdecai will contentedly spend "a useful afternoon with my ultra-violet machine and a grease crayon, mapping the passages of repaint ('strengthening' as we call it in the trade) on a gorgeous panel by—well, more or *less* by—the Allunno di Amico di Sandro. (God bless Berenson, I say.)"

The start of Bonfiglioli's writing career coincided roughly with the end of his career as a dealer and the end of his marriage, though what caused what is hard to say. In the mid-sixties, when Bonfiglioli Limited was at its height, he was the editor of a couple of small science-fiction magazines for which he wrote occasional items. The huge Victorian house in which he and his family lived was filled with lodgers, an arrangement that brought in extra income and fed Bon's hyperactive gregariousness. He was a master of impromptu parties, games, and practical jokes. Yet behind this aura of manic festivity—Falstaff played at 45 r.p.m.—some of his friends saw sadness, restlessness, and a fear of being alone. Sociability also masked an incipient drinking problem, not to mention a fair bit of philandering.

Margaret Bonfiglioli recalls her husband toward the end of their marriage shyly showing her the first few pages of "Don't Point That Thing at Me." By then, he'd become involved with Judith Todd, a former secretary of his, and after the divorce, in 1969, they moved into her house in the Lancashire village of Silverdale. Bon did a certain amount of casual dealing, but his art career was essentially finished; the next years were given over to the novel. By the time it was published, in 1973, the relationship with Todd, too, had ended. Filling in an author's questionnaire for his publisher



"This cloaking device avoids detection by the G.A.O."

years later, he wrote, "Married again and again; one died; one I deserted; one threw me out. You can't really want to know their names even if I could remember." The rest of Bonfiglioli's output was written during a steady decline. The dozen years remaining before his death were a calvary of alcoholism, depression, and poverty. He lived variously in Jersey and in Ireland (which had a policy of tax exemption for writers), sometimes alone, sometimes supported by friends, at times in utter penury. He seems to have recognized this misery as the cost of the freedom he required in order to write. In a letter to one of his sons, he advised, "Marrying a girl before you are established is like swimming the Channel with a concrete block tied to your left testicle."

Liberated from all concrete blocks, he wrote "Something Nasty in the Woodshed" (1976), a dark follow-up which finds Mortdecai living in Jersey and investigating a series of rapes that seem to involve witchcraft; then came Mortdecai's drug-running adventures, in "After You with the Pistol." There was an inspired, swashbuckling prequel to the trilogy, "All the Tea in China" (1978), about Karli Van Cleef, Mortdecai's nineteenth-century Jewish Dutch forebear, who comes to England to deal in delftware and Chinese porcelain, and then sails to China to trade opium. (Minus the opium, this family history is based on that of the famous art dealer Joseph Duveen; Bonfiglioli even snags a couple of anecdotes from S. N. Behrman's biography, "Duveen.") There were grand plans for a sequel to "All the Tea in China," in which Van Cleef would get mixed up in one of the Anglo-Afghan Wars; there was a plan for a book about Van Cleef's son (Mortdecai's father) that would link the generations and would again make liberal use of the life of Duveen. None of these exist. One manuscript, a slightly flimsy affair called "The Great Mortdecai Moustache Mystery," was left nearly finished at his death and published posthumously, completed by someone else.

Drinking may have destroyed the novelist, but it always played well in his novels. A typical Mortdecai day (and chapter) ends, "I suppose I went to bed at some stage," and a typical morning begins, "I turned my face to the wall, feeling like a collection of passages deleted from the Book of Job." Fortunately, Mortdecai always has Jock at hand to concoct ingenious pick-me-ups: "I must say that Drs Alka and Seltzer should have won the Nobel Prize years ago; my only quarrel with their brain-child is its *noise*." Margaret Bonfiglioli believes that her ex-husband found it hard to admit the role that alcohol played in his failing health, but there is evidence that, in private, his attitude toward it was one of clinical dispassion. Among his papers at his death was an article on "Drinking and Creativity," clipped from the *British Journal on Alcohol and Alcoholism*. On a list of forty-five heavy-drinking writers, Bon had inserted his own name between Berryman and Boswell, appending a marginal note: "At what age did these die?—Check." When, in 1985, Bonfiglioli succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver, he was fifty-six.

The undertow of pain and despair is what gives the books an emotional charge beyond their surface urbanity, and makes them stick in the mind long after you've quoted all the funny bits to your friends. There is a moving passage toward the end of "Don't Point That Thing at Me," in which happiness is suddenly seen to repose in all the drab, suburban mediocrity that Mortdecai despises. Hunted down by those who want to kill him, Mortdecai flees across a darkened moor near his boyhood home in Lancashire, alone and with death an apparent certainty:

> Above me and to my right shone the lights of the honest bungalow dwellers of Silverdale: I found myself envying them bitterly. It is chaps like them who have the secret of happiness, they know the art of it, they always knew it. Happiness is an annuity, or it's shares in a Building Society; it's a pension and blue hydrangeas, and wonderfully clever grandchildren, and being on the Committee, and just-a-few-earlies in the vegetable garden, and being alive and wonderful-for-his-age when old so-and-so is under the sod.

Silverdale is where Bonfiglioli was living when he wrote these words, a home he was about to leave, and the last home of any permanence he would have. Mortdecai concludes, "Happiness is easy: I don't know why more people don't go in for it." ♦

NEATEST TRICK OF THE WEEK

From the Hamden (Conn.) Chronicle.

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

IDENTITY CRISIS

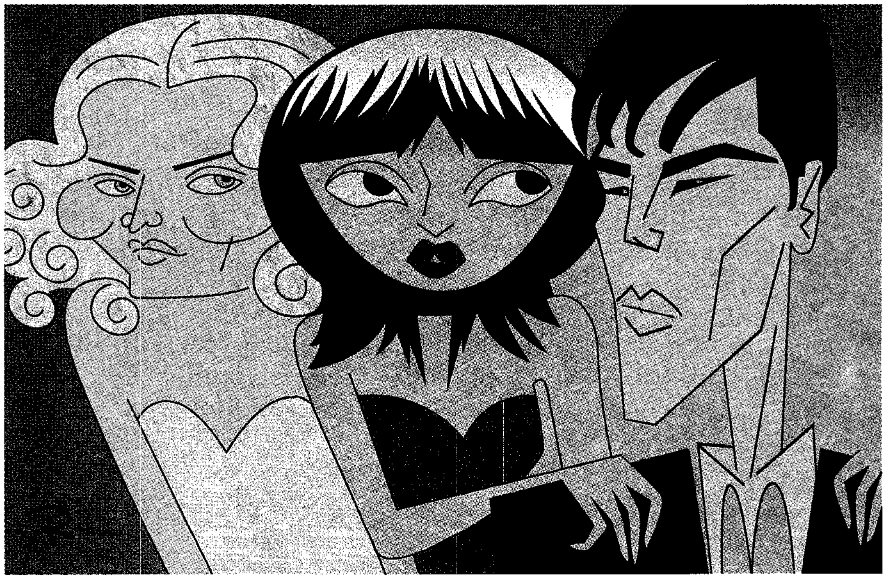
"Wicker Park" and "Infernal Affairs."

BY ANTHONY LANE

This has been the season of remake hell, and it isn't over yet. There is nothing disreputable in the notion of producers rooting through used material, and one could, indeed, find cogent reasons for arguing that the history of cinema has been the aesthetic equivalent of refried beans. Nevertheless, I smell more desperation than inspiration in the latest scrabble for ready-made plots, much of it powered by simple demographics; somebody, somewhere, must have done the math and worked out that "Big"—the Tom Hanks kid-swells-to-adult comedy—was all of sixteen years old, that a whole swath of teen-agers had never seen it, and that now was therefore the time to fob them off with "Thirteen Going On Thirty," a product of surpassing moldiness. "Fifty First Dates" made a hash of ideas first mooted by "Groundhog Day," and now comes "Wicker Park," which you have to applaud for sheer folly. This doesn't just reprise another film. It reprises a *French* film.

The original was "L'Appartement," which came out in 1996, an epoch so remote that you could mention France in a political speech and not even guarantee a laugh. Anyway, something about that movie led the director Paul McGuigan or the writer Brandon Boyce to think, Boy, this is just crying out for Josh Hartnett and a snowy Chicago. Hartnett plays Matthew, once a photographer (as instanced by his holding a Leica in the opening credits), now an advertising executive with an adoring fiancée. Matthew is about to fly to China on a business trip when his world develops the shakes. Two years beforehand—I am reliably informed that it was two years, although I spent most of the movie under the rock-hard impression that it was a matter of weeks, if not days—he loved a dancer named Lisa (Diane Kruger), who vanished without so much as a beep on his voice mail. Now, without warning, he overhears her voice from a phone booth and sneakily follows her trail, from restaurant to hotel room to apartment. When she finally turns to face him, she is—to the monumental surprise of nobody except Matthew—not the one he wants. In fact, she is a different Lisa (Rose Byrne): a nurse, or an actress, or something rum, who seems to wear the same coat and live in the same place as the missing dame. So, what ever happened to Lisa No. 1?

At the risk of unveiling a secret, I think I know the answer. I think she went off with Paris. Diane Kruger played Helen in this year's "Troy," while Rose Byrne played the sultry Briseis, whose abduction caused such a stink. "Wicker Park" was actually filmed before the Trojan epic, and both female leads give off that half-misty, half-tetchy look that comes to those who know that Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom are next on the menu, and who can't understand why they should be freezing their earlobes off in Illinois when they could be rolling around in hot sand. This may be one explanation for the drastic lack of sexual warmth generated by "Wicker Park," which was intended as a study of amorous obsession, breathing down the neck of the kinky, but which turned out, in my case, to be slightly less arousing than the brushable nap of the fake-velvet seat from which I watched it. The other explanation is Josh Hartnett.



Diane Kruger, Rose Byrne, and Josh Hartnett in the remake of a French romantic thriller.

ROBERT RISKO

In the days when Hollywood was Hollywood, when directors wore suits and eye patches and bellowed their instructions through a bullhorn, somebody of Mr. Hartnett's stature would have chiselled out a perfectly respectable career as the third lieutenant from the left in Civil War dramas. What is it, precisely, that so endears him to the enfeebled studios of today that they hoist him to the head of the credits? It is not fair to the poor fellow to demand that, in accordance with the gloopy mood of "Wicker Park," he plunge at regular intervals into emotional gulfs. The title refers to the place where Matthew and Lisa first heard the twang of Cupid, and where, next to a stall marked "Frank's Chili Dogs," they try to come together in times of need. The clenching and unclenching of the Hartnett features, during these affecting encounters, is meant to signal the amplitude of his desire, although, as I observed yet another onset of sniff-and-gulp, it occurred to me that Matthew might in fact have arrived early at Wicker Park and, mindless of his great love, snaffled a quick bite, and that the unromantic Frank might have ladled twice the recommended dose of chili onto our hero's dog.

Still, not to worry. With that kissintolerant mouth and those tight mini-eyes, Josh Hartnett can bide his time, wait thirty years, go becomingly gray, and walk straight into the title role for a five-part TV bio-pic named "George W. Bush: He Got the Power." I am casting no aspersions on the President when I say that there is something of Bush in the eager, uncommanding, almost child-like tenor of Hartnett's performance, and the guiding rule of "Wicker Park" is that the greater the distance at which women orbit the central male the sexier they become. The indispensable Lisa, for instance, is a total drip compared with Matthew's fiancée (Jessica Paré), whom we barely glimpse, and by the time we reach the fleeting cameos from the agent at the American Airlines desk and the waitress who takes an order for a double vodka this movie is ready to roll.

Only at the close does the narrative of "Wicker Park" diverge from that of "L'Appartement." One version ends with slo-mo huggings and grindingly plaintive rock, the other with a treacherous twist and the apartment going up in flames. You'll never guess which is which. The unnerving thing is that "Wicker Park" clings to its predecessor like a lost twin. There are scraps of talk, and whole passages of action, that are reproduced with near-paranoid fidelity; when a character serves coffee in tall wineglasses because she can't locate the cups, she is aping a French initiative. Maybe we should not be surprised by such exactitude, given that Gilles Mimouni, who wrote and directed the first movie, also served as an executive producer on the second; what baffles me is that, of two such entwined movies, one sings and the other doesn't. "L'Appartement" runs only a minute or two shorter than "Wicker Park," yet it seems by far the swifter work. The cynical explanation is that Paris is simply prettier than Chicago, that we extend unjustified license to French movies because they whisk along in style, and that dumb dialogue turns lyrical in an unfamiliar tongue. All of which can be true, but it doesn't excuse the surgical removal of humor and high spirits from the American version. You may prefer Coldplay to Charles Aznavour, but, believe me, on a movie soundtrack there's no comparison. French viewers get to see bobbed haircuts and naked bodies; we get slush, first on the sidewalk and then in the gaze of Josh Hartnett. They get a thriller wrapped up in a romance, with winks to Alfred Hitchcock; we get a love story without the larks. And the leading lady? We get Diane Kruger; they get Monica Bellucci. The prosecution rests.

Although I am exasperated by anybody, especially myself, who shows up late for a movie, "Infernal Affairs" presents a special case. I would advise you to time your arrival so as to miss the opening sequence. This is a flashback to a police training school, where we meet the two main characters. Unfortunately, each is played by a younger actor—not the one that we will follow for the rest of the film—and the confusion thus sown is calamitous, not least because the rest of the plot will require the unstinting use of your wits. It uncurls, in skittering fashion, across a gleaming Hong Kong, where Yan (Tony Leung) has been an undercover cop for the best part of a decade; his counterpart is Inspector Lau (Andy Lau), an overcover cop in the shameful pay of a gangster mob, run by the jolly and merciless Sam (Eric Tsang). Each spy discovers that the other exists without knowing who he is: an impasse of whose nicety John le Carré would be proud.

The resulting game of cat and mouse, in which both mice labor under the illusion that they are playing cat, has already provoked two sequels, and you can view the complete trilogy at this year's New York Film Festival, should you wish to frazzle your brains beyond repair. I was certainly happy to be trapped in the film's conceit, and the directors, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, manage to convince us that we have witnessed an action movie, although in fact the quantity of violence is so minimal that, under Hong Kong law, "Infernal Affairs" barely qualifies as a motion picture. Nevertheless, there is a perceptible thinness to the sheen of the proceedings, and the actors—with the sturdy exception of Anthony Wong, who plays the boss of the police squad—rely on a flow of soulful, impassive cool. Tony Leung himself perfected this manner as the star of "In the Mood for Love," but you start to wonder, heretically, whether it hints at broody depths that do not always exist, and how well it will travel when, like "L'Appartement," this foreign hit arrives in Hollywood, ripe for transmutation. (The remake is already a done deal, and rumors speak of Martin Scorsese at the helm, which would be the best way of avoiding another "Wicker Park.") I only hope that whoever takes charge will retain the vertiginous Hong Kong sense of a tale being told more on the skyline of a city than on its overpeopled streets. At the end, somebody is even *buried* on a rooftop: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, air to air. ♦

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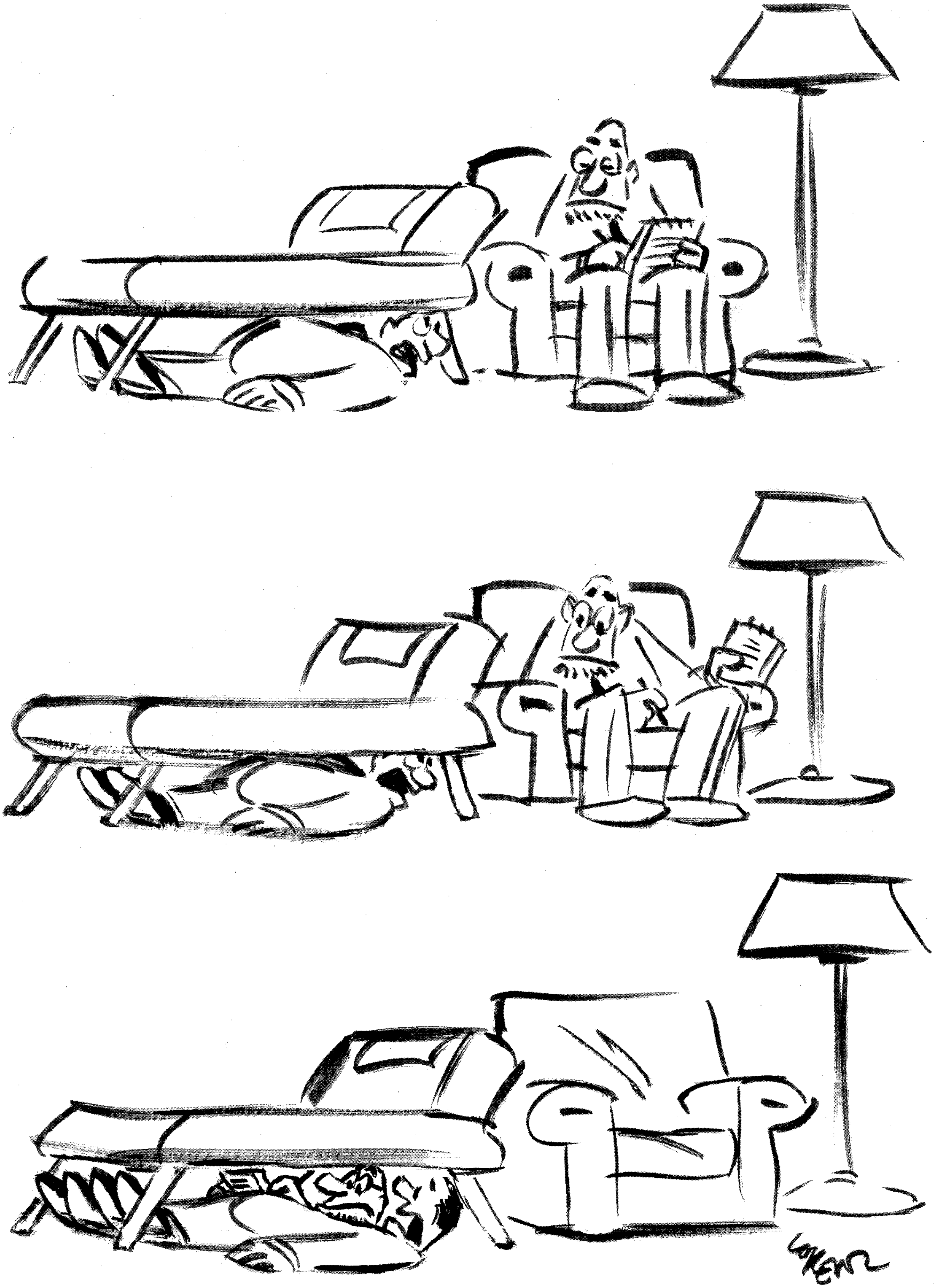

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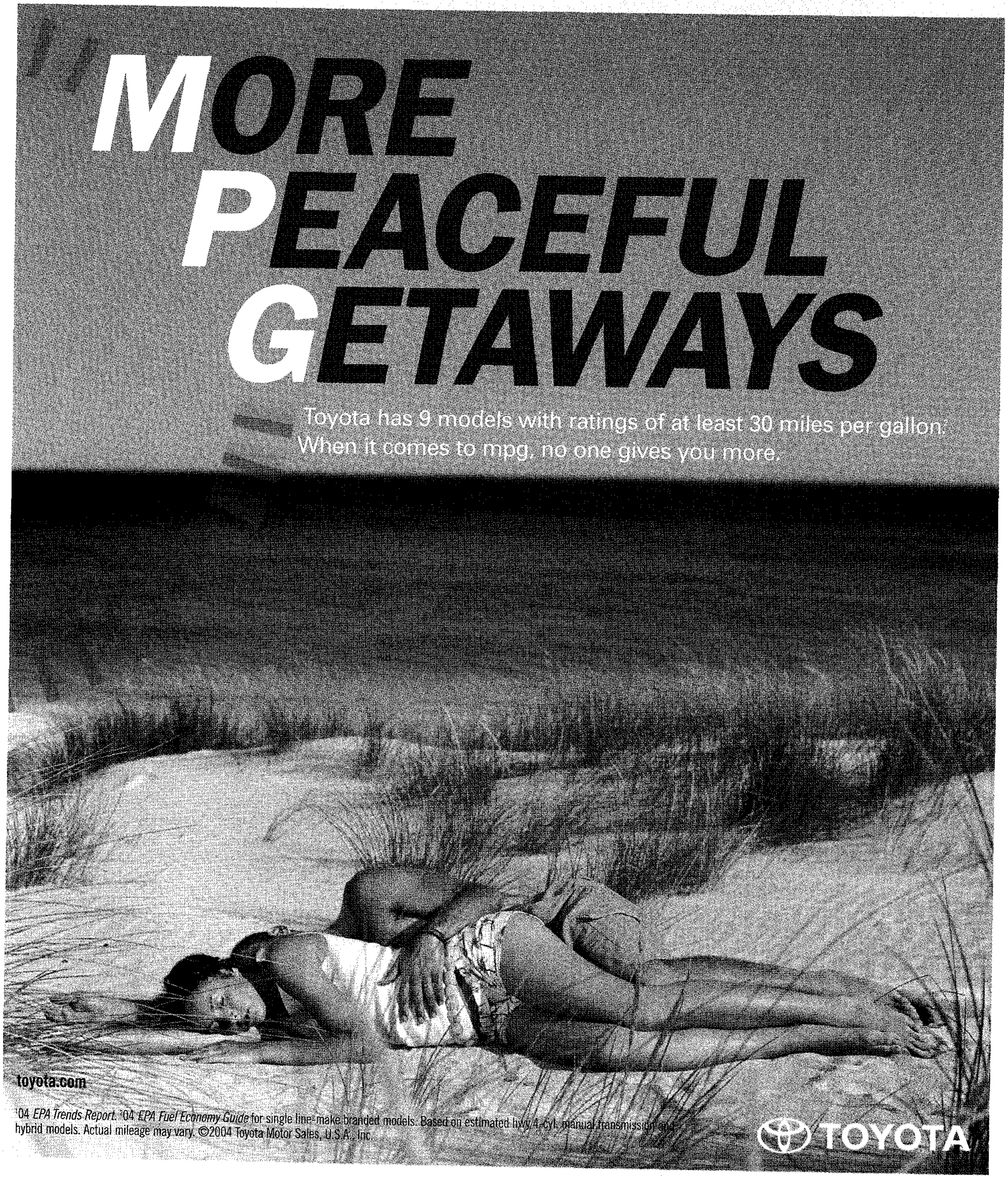
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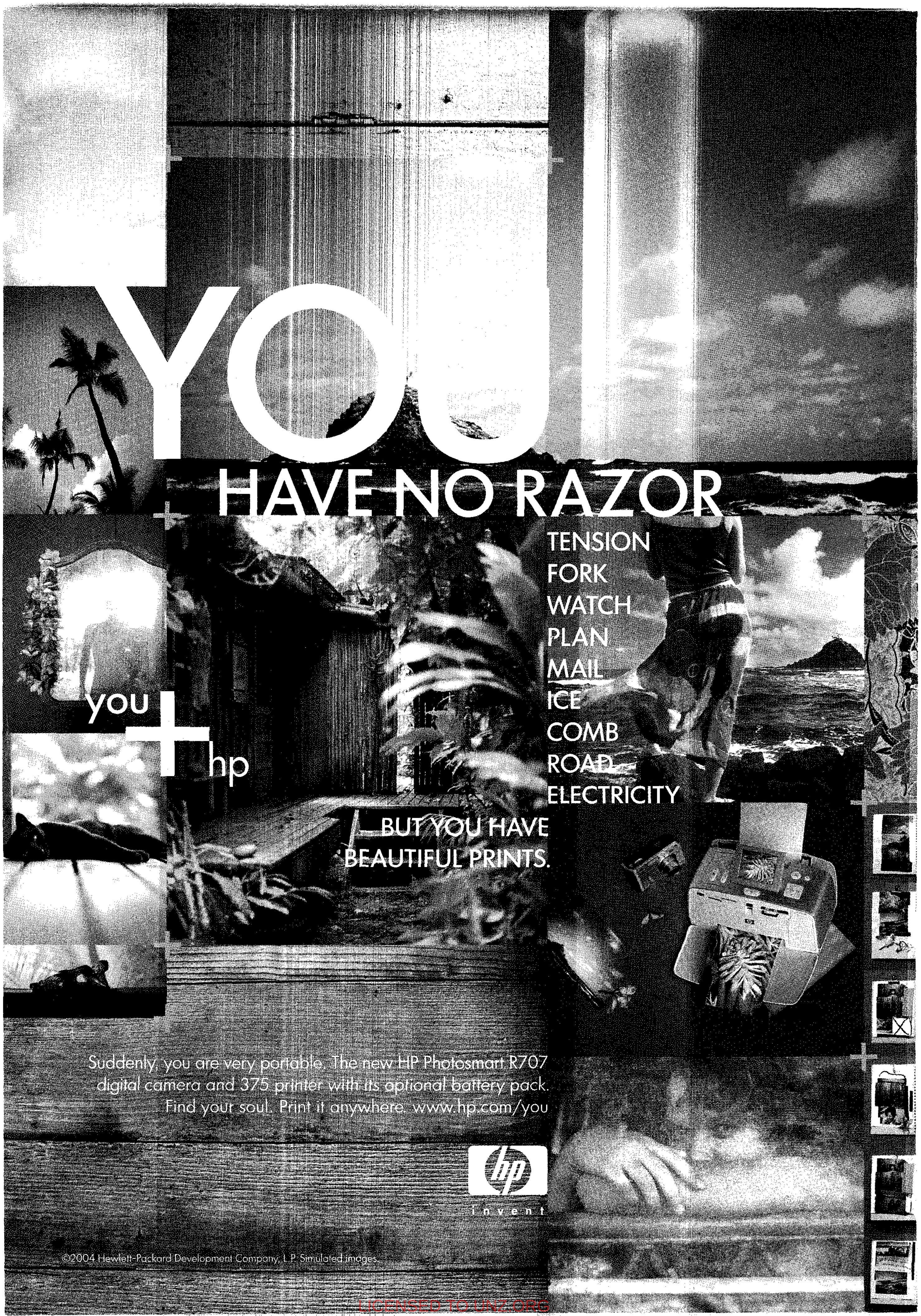

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